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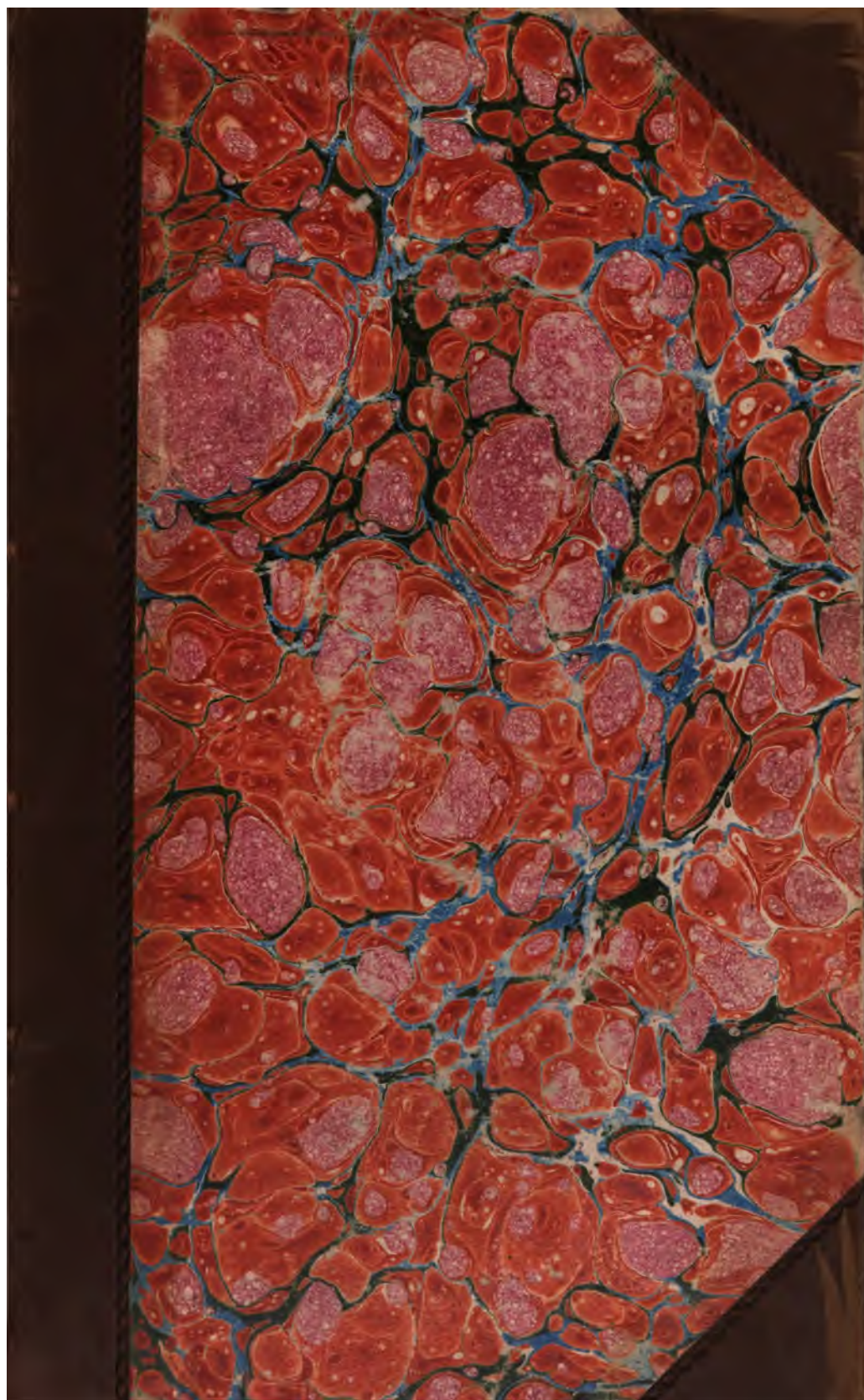
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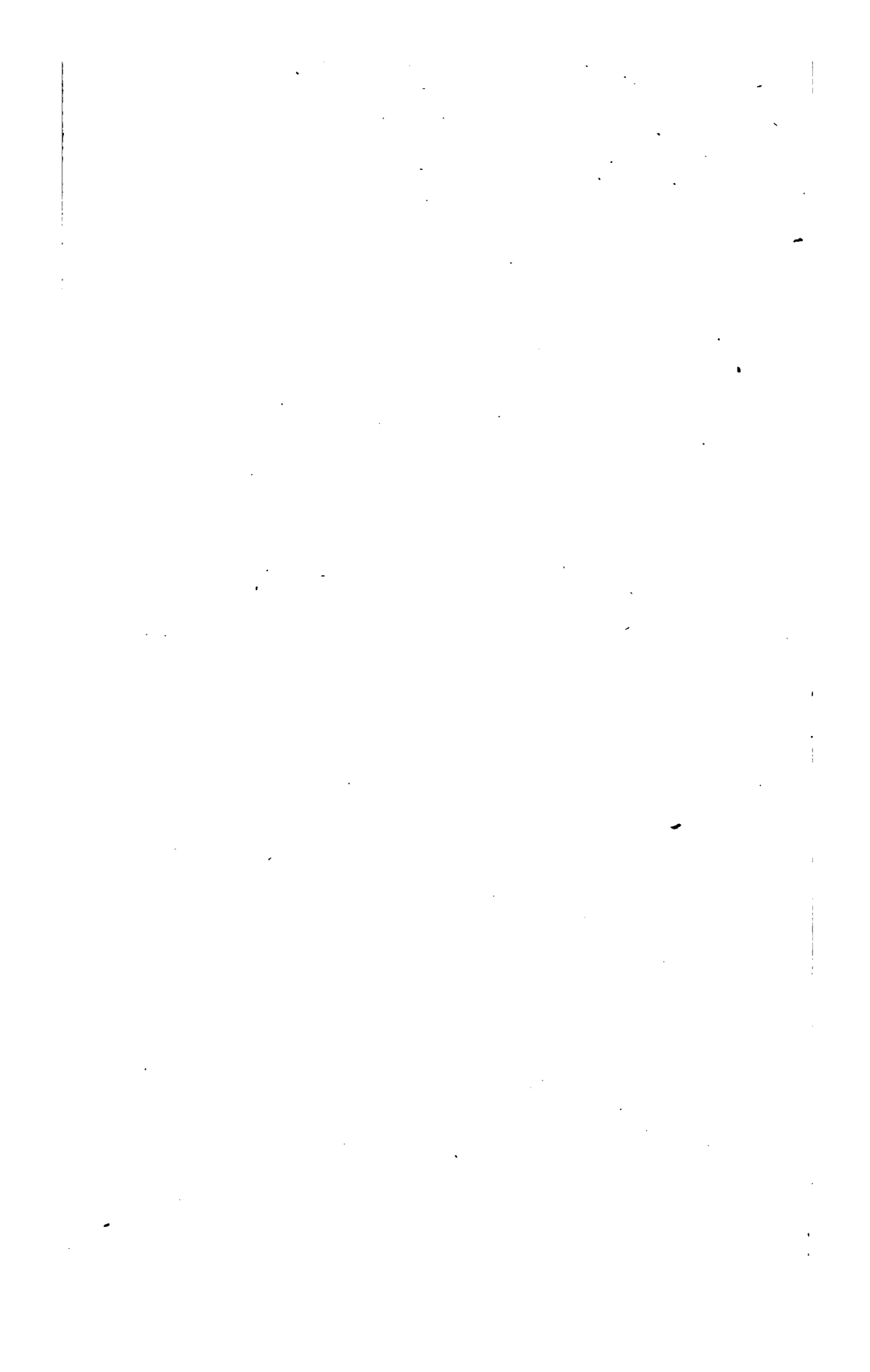
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MISCELLANIES.

MISCELLANIES

2H. 1827.

RELATING TO THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES,

AND TO OTHER

SACRED SUBJECTS.

BY SAMUEL GREEN,

BAPTIST MINISTER, BLUNTISHAM, HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

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INTRODUCTION.

That some parts of this little volume are rather a compilation than an original work, is what the Author wishes to be clearly understood by all its readers.

That part in which the Evidences of Divine Revelation are stated, is chiefly taken from Paley, Prideaux, and the Authors of the *Pantologia*. Observations are interspersed, which are intended to enforce the necessity of obeying, as well as professing to believe, the sacred oracles.

The Chapter on the Figurative Language of Scripture is principally taken from the very valuable work on "the Prophetic Style," by Dr. John Smith of Campbeltown; a work which every minister of the gospel, especially those who have not had the advantage of a classical education, and who have but few books, ought attentively to read.

In the Chapter on the English Versions of the Scriptures, the authorities are Bishop Newcome on Biblical Translations, Orme on the same subject, Dr. Adam Clarke's General Preface to his valuable Commentary on the Bible, and the Reverend Thomas Hartwell Horne's excellent Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures.

No other particular acknowledgement seems necessary, except it be to the excellent Commentaries on the holy

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CHAP. I.

OF THE BEING OF GOD.

The existence of God is the basis of all religion. If there be no God, religion is a vain thing; it can be of no consequence, either what we believe or what we practise. But our best feelings, as well as our judgment, revolt at this supposition.

As the being of God is a fundamental truth, some persons have contended that it ought not to be made a matter of controversy, but taken for granted.

In answer to this, let it be observed, that many who fear God are tried with strong temptations, which often greatly distress them; and that not a few have been tempted to doubt his existence. On account of these temptations, they have thought that they must be sinners above all other men. It cannot therefore be wrong to endeavour to fortify their minds with arguments defending them against such temptations. Persons thus distressed should know that there is no sin in being tempted: we are not guilty of sin until the temptation is cherished, or obtains the consent of the mind. If to be tempted were sinful, some of the best men would be guilty of the greatest sins, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself would not be innocent. He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, but he repelled his fiery darts by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; thereby teaching his followers how to resist the devil, that he may flee from them. It is their consolation in all their trials, that "they have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as they are,

yet without sin." They may therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Pretensions to atheism have, in most instances, arisen from the pride and sensuality of those who made them. In general they have amounted to no more than the impious, foolish wish, (Ps. xiv. 1.) "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The word *fool* in this passage signifies a poor, thoughtless, sinful mortal, inflated with vanity and self-conceit; one who has not the fear of God before his eyes, but who lives as though there were no God, and wishes that there were none. They who in words acknowledge that there is a God, yet in works deny him, are guilty of this folly; they are practical atheists. Indeed the progress of men is generally from practical atheism to speculative. It is not until they are abominable and corrupt, that they say in their hearts, "There is no God;" thus illustrating the truth of that word which they wish to be false.

The human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and out of it proceed all kinds of evil. Its enmity to God and true holiness influences it to desire any thing to be true that may seem to extenuate its guilt, or to offer an apology for its crimes. These workers of iniquity have knowledge enough to understand, that if there be a God he will punish their transgressions; and therefore by repeated acts of rebellion they sear their consciences as with a hot iron. What they fear to be true they endeavour to disbelieve; and what they dread, they try to banish from their thoughts; till at length God gives them up to judicial blindness: they then degrade his character, and in a few instances, they have doubted his existence. In this state a man is as near to final destruction as he can be in this world; he is living on the very confines of hell.

Some of the ancient philosophers denied the existence of a God; but the greater part of them, though they were unacquainted with the true God, acknowledged "gods many and lords many." There have also been some men of this description in later times. Yet as we cannot deny

that human beings are endowed with mental capacity, because there have been a few idiots; so neither should we deny that men in general believe there is a God, though some individuals of them, both in heathen and in Christian nations, have called in question, or even denied his existence.

When the scriptural account of the origin of the world is contrasted with the discordant hypotheses of ancient philosophers, it forcibly illustrates the necessity of revelation, by which we understand that "the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

It is utterly impossible that any thing should arise into being of itself, or that it should be produced without some producing cause, existing in order of time, as well as of nature, prior to the thing produced; neither is there any conceivable medium between a self-existent being and a being which derives its existence from another being. It follows therefore that the existence of men and of all other beings, may be traced up, either mediately or immediately, to what is self-existent, that is, to the first great cause of all things,—the ever-blessed God.

I. In stating some of the evidences of the existence of a God, it may be observed, that no man need go further than himself to prove it. We know that we are capable of feeling pleasure and pain, of thinking and of reasoning, of moving and of acting; but these cannot be more evident to us than it is that we exist, for did we not exist, we could be capable of nothing.

Should we doubt the existence of all other things, that very doubt would make us perceive our own existence, and we should have an intuitive, infallible perception that we did doubt, as well as that we did exist. Every man knows that he is something, that he did not produce himself, that he was produced by some other being; and, if he look to his progenitors for ten or twenty generations back, he finds on the same evidence that neither could they produce themselves, for no approach is made towards self-production, how far back soever he extends the series. Bare nothing cannot

produce being; something then must have existed from eternity, and that something is God.

What is not from eternity could not exist of itself; but what exists of itself does necessarily exist, and is ever the same, not subject to change or decay. Any thing produced by the one eternal Being must derive all its powers and faculties from him; therefore, as men and other beings are possessed of intelligence, we not only know that there is a God, but that he is an intelligent agent, and the source of intelligence to the whole creation; and that from him originate all the different orders of understanding found among the creatures. They are, both as to body and spirit, the productions of their Creator.

II. The existence of God is proved from natural conscience. Had we no external proof of his existence, this internal evidence might be sufficient to convince us of its reality. Conscience is that faculty of the soul which judges of the morality of our thoughts, words, and actions, and which either acquits or condemns us. It is God's vicegerent in the bosom of every man, observing all his conduct even in the most secret retirement. Let him effectually conceal his actions from human observation; yet, if those actions are evil, conscience will be his accuser; if they are good, it will approve of them, and he will feel within himself that he has done right.

This evidence to the being of God is, perhaps, as clear and conclusive as any other, and its influence is as general; it is always present with every man under all circumstances. Its workings are not indeed always equal, but like the pulse in the human frame, which, though sometimes it beats higher and quicker than at other times, yet still beats. Conscience will work; and though violence may be used to prevent its operations for a time, it cannot altogether be extinguished. Those men who apparently go on in sin without control; who despise religion, and laugh at the idea of a future state; are not without inward pangs. Conscience will now and then lift up its voice, and assert that there is a God, a heaven, and a hell; and that their conduct is vicious, and leads to misery. Bold and daring

sinners may conceal their fears, and appear joyful in the midst of others; but let them retire into secrecy and silence, and meditate upon their conduct; the voice of conscience will then be like the roaring of a lion, and its sting like the torment of a scorpion. This is not peculiar to men in any condition of life; the cottager and the monarch are equally the subjects of it; neither the poverty and weakness of the one, nor the wealth and authority of the other, can exempt them from hearing its voice, and feeling either its benign influence, or its tremendous power.

How many tyrants have trembled on the throne, their conscience bringing their sins to recollection, while innocent persons arraigned before them, have felt composure and quietness, even in prospect of the most dreadful suffering. They had nothing to fear from human judgment; yet, by the power of this inward monitor, they have been a terror to themselves, and have actually sunk under an intolerable burden, which they could by no means remove. Men that could face an army without fear, and go into the field of battle without timidity, have been completely subdued by their own conscience, and in many instances have sought the knife, the halter, or the pistol, to be rid of its torment.

Tiberius, the Roman emperor, whose crimes were numerous and unnatural, could neither dissemble nor evade the horrors of his mind; and it is said of the cruel Nero, that after having murdered his own mother, he was followed by imaginary devils; his distracted fancy representing to him furies and flames, ready to torment him. If there were no power more than human, nor punishment greater than that which magistrates can inflict, why are magistrates themselves under the most fearful apprehensions of future misery? It proceeds from natural conscience, and the fact proves that there is a God. It may further be remarked on this subject, that the power of this inward faculty is generally greatest in the near approach of death. Men who have in a great measure stifled its convictions in the time of health and strength, when death has appeared in their view, have felt the revival of guilt formerly

smothered ; conscience, like a sleeping lion, has awoke, has rushed upon them, has blasted their peace, and has filled them with the utmost dread. The soul feeling its guilt, and convinced of its immortality, has extended its fears to eternity, and has trembled at the thought of him who lives for ever, because he can for ever punish. Conscience in the bosom of every man produces a law with clear and express penal sanctions, and, in consequence of sin, it urges the penalty of that law upon him as a criminal ; it erects its tribunal, passes sentence upon him, and even begins the punishment before he leaves this mortal state. Does not this prove that there is a God, and that men are naturally conscious of his existence ?

III. The same truth appears from the consent of all nations. This has been remarked by many heathen writers. Aristotle says, " all men have a persuasion of a Deity, or that there is a God." Cicero observes, that " there is no nation so wild and savage, whose minds are not imbued with the opinion of the gods ; many entertain wrong notions of them, but all suppose and own the divine power and nature." Seneca says, " there never was a nation so dissolute and abandoned, so lawless and immoral, as to believe there is no God." Plutarch has these remarkable words ; " If you go over the earth, you may find cities without walls, letters, kings, houses, wealth, and money ; devoid of theatres and schools ; but a city without temples and gods, where there is no use of prayers, of oaths, and oracles, nor of sacrifices to obtain good, or avert evil, no man ever saw."

It has indeed been objected to this, that whole nations have been found destitute of any notion of God ; but the fact may be fairly questioned. Hasty and inconsiderate travellers may have asserted it, but we know that what one traveller asserts as true, another has often contradicted. When the first missionaries went into Greenland, they thought that its inhabitants had neither religion nor worship, and that there was not so much as the least trace of any conception of a Divine Being among them, as they had no word in their language by which to express him.

But when they became more acquainted with them, and with their language, they found it to be quite the reverse. They then learned by conversing with some perfectly untutored Greenlanders, that their ancestors believed in a Supreme Being, and rendered him homage ; but that their posterity had neglected it by little and little, till at length they had nearly lost all thoughts of him ; yet they still retained some ideas, both of a God, and of a future state. Had these missionaries returned home before they had discovered what was the real condition of the Greenlanders, they might have asserted with apparent truth, what a longer acquaintance with them proved to be false. Men who go among people of a different language, and of quite different habits from their own, should remain with them a considerable time, and make exact observations upon both their language and customs, before they pronounce decidedly on a case of so much difficulty of determination. The apostle Paul, speaking of the heathen, says, “ For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse.” (Rom. i. 20.) This should have considerable weight with those who receive the word of God as a divine revelation, and should make them cautious how they admit the reports of travellers on this subject, inasmuch as all nations of men have the means of knowing that there is a God, and of understanding something of his perfections ; and unless they can lose all sense of themselves and of the objects around them, they cannot lose all ideas of God ; which one would think to be a case hardly possible.

IV. Another argument for the existence of God is derived from his works. Into this we can enter but very imperfectly ; the number, the magnitude, and the excellency of them exceeding all our thoughts. In them we see evidences of his power and skill, as well as of his existence. There is not a single particle of dust on the earth, nor a blade of grass in the field, nor flower in the garden, but declares the being of God. The plants, the shrubs, the trees, the birds of the air, the fishes in the sea, the

beasts of the forest, the globe we inhabit, the whole planetary system, worlds beyond worlds, and systems beyond systems; the most exalted angel and the meanest reptile, with the various animal tribes between these wide extremes; all declare the great First Cause, and are so many witnesses for him. That there are many things of which we have little or no knowledge, is readily granted; but this is of little or no consequence in the argument, as all our experience tends to prove that there is no effect without a cause, and it is very apparent, that, in this case, that cause must be God. To talk of an eternal series of animals and vegetables is an absurd hypothesis, formed only to serve a purpose, and is contrary to common sense. Should any one be found capable of defending so great an absurdity, he cannot deny that each successive part of this eternal series required a preceding part, since it could not bring itself into existence; he cannot, therefore, deny that it was an effect, presupposing and requiring a cause. But shall it be said that every successive part required a preceding part, and that the infinite series itself required nothing to precede it? Shall it be said that each part of the series required a cause, but that the series itself required no cause? This does not apply to the succession of hours and minutes, for one hour is not produced by a former hour, as animal is produced by animal; there are no parts in duration produced by preceding parts. There must, therefore, have been a first in each series of animals and vegetables; and of every species of animals there must have been a first, an original pair. An eternal series is absurd. What, have lions, horses, wolves, dogs, and all other animals, existed in an eternal series, without an original pair? If this can be believed, surely there is no absurdity too great to be believed.

Equal difficulties occur on the supposition that the existence of things is casual. This denies the connexion between cause and effect, and is as weak and absurd as is the idea of their eternal existence. This hypothesis is attributed to Epicurus, who is said to have reasoned in its defence in the following manner. He supposed that in-

numerable solid atoms had existed from eternity in infinite space ; that these atoms were of different sizes and figures ; that they were all separate from each other, and were originally motionless. When it was objected that they must have remained so for ever, he invented for them an endeavour or tendency towards motion, and declared that this was in them from eternity. When it was objected that unless they were moved eternally by this tendency, they could never have moved at all, he avoided this objection by saying they had moved from eternity in parallel directions. It was again objected to him, that with this direction they would never have approached any nearer to each other ; but he endeavoured to surmount this difficulty also, by giving them an oblique direction. The cause of their motion he declared to be their weight ; not knowing that there is no weight where there is no attracting body, and that every direction towards the centre of the earth, the point of attraction to its inhabitants, is downward.

Dr. Gill gives an interesting account of a Greenlander, who is represented as reasoning in the following manner before his conversion, which shows that it is natural to man, even in a savage state, to ascribe the making of the world to God. "It is true," said he, "we were ignorant heathens, and knew nothing of God or a Saviour ; and indeed who should tell us of him till you came ? but you must not imagine that no Greenlander thinks about these things. I have often thought that a kajah (a boat), with all its tackling and implements, does not grow into existence of itself, but must be made by the labour and ingenuity of man ; and one that does not understand it, would immediately spoil it. Now the meanest bird has far more skill in its structure than the best kajah, and no man can make a bird. But there is still a far greater art shown in the formation of a man than of any other creature. Who was it that made him ? I bethought me that he proceeded from his parents, and they from their parents ; but some must have been the first parents ; whence did they come ? Common report informs me that they grew out of the earth ; but if so, why does it not still happen that men grow out of the

earth? and from whence did this same earth itself, the sea, the sun, the moon, and stars, arise into existence? Certainly there must be some Being who made all these things, a Being that always was, and can never cease to be. He must be inexpressibly more mighty, knowing, and wise, than the wisest man. He must be very good too, because every thing that he has made is good, and useful, and necessary for us. Ah, did I but know him, how would I love him, and honour him! But who has seen him? who has ever conversed with him? None of us poor men. Yet there may be men too that know something of him. O that I could but speak with such! Therefore (continued he) as soon as ever I heard you speak of this Being, I believed it directly with all my heart, because I had so long desired to hear it." This account not only shows the untutored reason of our common nature, but reminds us of Rom. ii. 14, 15, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." The fragments of the moral law, originally written on the heart, exerting their influence by a natural sense of the being of a God, do, to a certain degree, teach our obligation to that Being. Hence it appears that God, who at the last day will judge every man according to what he has done, in proportion to the light he has had, will be just, and that the whole rational creation will approve of his procedure.

V. The last argument I shall state is, that which arises from the manifestation of design in all parts of the creation. Admitting that the world and all things therein could come into existence by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or in other words, by chance; is it likely that there could have been that order, beauty, and adaptation, which are now discovered in all its parts? A man that would assert this, must have more faith in *nothing*, than most men have in the everblessed God.

"There cannot be design without a designer; contri-

vance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement without an arranger; subserviency and relation to a purpose without the existence of a being that could thus purpose; means suitable to an end, and exerting their operation to accomplish that end, without the end ever being contemplated, or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, imply the presence of intelligence and mind." So says the judicious Paley. "Was ever any considerable work in which there was required a great variety of parts, and a regular and orderly disposition of those parts, wrought by chance? will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thousand instances, and not fail in one? How often might a man, after he had jumbled a set of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground, before they would fall into an exact poem; yea, or so much as make a good discourse in prose! And may not a little book be as easily made by chance as the great volume of the world? How long might a man be sprinkling colours upon canvas with a careless hand, before he would happen to make the picture of a man! and is a man easier made by chance than his picture? How long might twenty thousand blind men, who should be sent out from several remote parts of England, wander up and down before they would all meet upon Salisbury plain, and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an army! And yet this is much more easy to be imagined than how the innumerable parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world." (Archbishop Tillotson). Let any man view the works of nature, and ask himself how they came into existence, and why one thing is so happily fitted to answer the purpose of another, and how they all came to be united and blended together, and his own reason will answer, "God made them all; and the variety and wonderful combination of their several parts display his wisdom, and answer the purposes of his will."

The great Sir Isaac Newton chose to consider God as a Being possessing supreme *dominion*. The word God, according to him, is a relative term, and has regard to servants. He allows that it denotes a Being, eternal, infinite,

and absolutely perfect ; but he adds that such a one without dominion would not be God. He observes that the word God frequently signifies Lord ; but every lord is not God. God is a spirit, and hence it follows that the true God is living, intelligent, powerful, and supreme, or supremely perfect ; that he is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient ; that he endures from eternity to eternity, and is present from infinity to infinity. It is confessed, says he, that God exists necessarily, and by the same necessity he exists always and every where. Hence also he must be perfectly similar, all eye, all ear, all intellect, all arm, all the power of perceiving, understanding, and acting ; but after a manner not at all corporeal, after a manner not like that of men, but after a manner wholly unknown to us. He is destitute of body and bodily shape, and therefore cannot be seen, heard, nor touched, nor ought to be worshipped under the representation of any thing corporeal. We have ideas of the attributes of God ; but do not know the substance even of any thing : we see only the figures and colours of bodies, we hear only sounds, touch only outward surfaces, smell only odours, and taste only flavours, nor can we by any sense or any reflex act know their inward substances ; much less can we have any notion of the substance of God. We know him by his properties and attributes ; by the most wise and most excellent structure of things, and by final causes ; but we adore and worship him, on account of his dominion ; for God, setting aside dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but fate and nature. (Pantologia, article GOD.)

Every organized being, every vegetable, and every animal in the world, is a complete system in itself, each possessing parts and faculties adapted to the purposes of its nature ; purposes obvious and useful, yet all regularly and completely accomplished, all of which argue, not only that there is a God, but that his power and presence pervade all nature. Amongst others we may observe that the grass is suited to adorn the earth, and to become food for an innumerable multitude of animals. The fruits of the garden, and the corn of the field, as well as various kinds of ani-

mals, are suited to become food for mankind. The trees which grow on the earth are useful for furniture, fencing, and building. The earth itself, the air, the rain, and the light, are all adapted to the production and preservation of animal and vegetable life. The sun is suited to shine, and the earth to receive light from his beams. The planets are formed to move in their orbits, and to perform their respective revolutions, with regularity and harmony. The great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts ; on which sail both the great and the small ships, where the leviathan doth play, and all the finny tribes do swim ; is highly expressive of its Creator's power. In every one of these, even in the most minute of them, there is manifested an understanding and a skill peculiar to the everblessed God ; nor do they all contain, nor does any thing we have known, or seen, or heard contain a full description of his amazing energy. And shall his existence be denied ? shall it be said that there is no God ? What then are we ? whence came we ? whither are we tending ? What is the world in which we live ? and whence came the earth, the air, and the heavens, with their ten thousand times ten thousand tribes of living, moving animals ? The very thought contains the utmost degree of moral turpitude.

God, by his omnipotent influence, works every moment, in every part of the universe ; moving every atom, opening every leaf, finishing every blade of grass, erecting every tree, conducting every particle of vapour, every drop of rain, and every flake of snow ; he guides every ray of light, breathes in every wind, directs the vivid lightning, speaks in the rolling thunder, pours out the streams, fires the volcano, heaves the sea, and shakes the ponderous globe.

In the universe of minds, he formed, he preserves, he animates, and he directs all the mysterious and wondrous powers of knowledge, virtue, and moral action ; all originate in him, and without him there could not be a single thought or idea in existence. In the contrivance of these things, their attributes, and their operations, is seen a stupendous display of knowledge and wisdom. They all ex-

isted in his eternal mind, as in a vast storehouse of ideas and designs, and existed there from everlasting. *Of him*, as the original Designer and Author; *by him*, as the efficient Cause; and *to him*, as the ultimate End, and for the manifestation of his glory and goodness, are all things in universal nature, through the whole compass of time and eternity.

“ His essence is a vast abyss,
Which angels cannot sound;
An ocean of infinities,
Where all our thoughts are drowned.”

WATTS.

Convinced of these truths, the royal psalmist teaches that his praises should be celebrated by angels; by the sun, moon, and stars of light; by the heaven of heavens, and the waters that be above the heavens; for he commanded and they were created; he hath also established them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass. The earth, the dragons, and all deeps; fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word; mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl; kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; both young men, and maidens; old men, and children; should all praise the Lord, for this sufficient reason, that his name alone is excellent, and his glory above the earth and heaven. (See Psalm cxlviii.) What folly, what madness, yea, what frantic madness, must it then be, not only to refuse to praise him, but to deny his very existence! Miserable and guilty man, who thus disownest the Being that formed thee, and in whom thou livest and movest, and without whom thou couldst not exist a single moment, where wilt thou hide thy guilty head, when he shall judge the world in righteousness? Nor much less miserable is he, who, though not a speculative atheist, is nevertheless a practical one; who professes to know God, but in works denies him: either he who indulges in pride, avarice, sensuality, or any other open vice; or he who maintains the form of godliness, but denies the power of it.

O, my soul, thou art fully convinced that there is a God; but dost thou feel as thou oughtest towards him? Is he ever in thy thoughts, and dost thou continually set him before thee? Art thou desirous of his favour, and dost thou dread his righteous displeasure? Is he all eye, all ear, and every where present? then let it be thy constant endeavour to realize his presence in all places. Let every object remind thee of him. Behold him in the works of nature, the economy of providence, and the methods of grace. See how he glows in the sun, shines in the moon, and sparkles in the stars: observe him in the constant succession of night and day, the changing seasons, and the rolling year. He is thy creator, thy preserver, and thy constant benefactor. It is he that supports thee, and gives thee all thy comforts. His favour is life; his frown is death. Let it be thy daily care to be approved in his sight. What an awful thing it would be, if, when thou leavest the body, and departest out of time into eternity, he should doom thee to bear his weighty indignation for ever and for ever; if then he should be to thee a consuming fire, and yet thou shouldst remain unconsumed; if thou shouldst be supported by his almighty power, to endure his avenging and everlasting wrath! Let this thought deeply affect thee, while life and opportunity remain; and let it influence thee to improve the moments that are left thee in this mortal state, to receive the gospel of the blessed God, and to look to his Son Jesus Christ as thy Redeemer and thy Saviour; that when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, thou mayest, through the sacrifice of the cross, enter into the joy of thy Lord.

CHAP. II.

EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The Scriptures are rejected by some men as a cunningly devised fable, the work of designing priests and crafty politicians, who wished to keep men in awe that they might subserve the purposes of pride and ambition. This is characteristic of many in the present day, who either openly or insidiously strive to undermine the foundations of our holy religion, and thereby to break the bond that unites one man to another, and all men to their Maker. This, however, is a vain attempt. Had it been possible, it would not have been left for infidels of the present day to effect it; their brethren in ancient times would have done it, but they laboured in vain; the cause of God still exists, nor has the malice of earth and hell united been able to overthrow it.

When Christianity was in its infancy, it triumphed over every opposition; "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They strove with all their might to crush the cause of the Son of God, and to kill it in its very birth; but he that sitteth in the heavens laughed at their puny efforts; notwithstanding all they could do, he set his king upon his holy hill of Zion, on which he has reigned ever since, and on which he will reign till all the purposes of God respecting his mediatorial kingdom shall be accomplished; when its administration shall be finally closed, and there will no longer be any state of probation, consequently no need of a distinction between the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. Then Christ will cease to exercise any distinct dominion;

but shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and be himself subject to him, that God may be all in all.

That cause which has outlived so many opposers, and triumphed over such powerful obstacles, and increased in strength and glory to so great a degree, has nothing to fear from the infidels of the present day, any more than it had from those of former times. It will still increase, and extend its moral conquests, until infidelity itself shall hide its head and blush with shame, and until the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Yet, as we frequently hear of the bold and daring attempts of some men against Divine Revelation, we will endeavour to lay before the reader a compendious view of the evidences for the inspiration of the sacred writings, and by consequence for the truth and stability of our holy religion.

Every thing dear to man is involved in the testimony which God has given us concerning his Son. With this in our hands, and fully believing its contents, we may sustain the difficulties and afflictions of life, and be consoled in the prospect of the most cruel and lingering death. But destitute of faith in this testimony, man, like a ship tossed up and down on the stormy ocean without anchor or ballast, floats in uncertainty for a little season, and then sinks to rise no more.

And what would these friends to mankind, as they wish to be thought, give us in the place of the Bible and the Christian religion? Nothing but reason, which we have already as well as they, though they vainly arrogate to themselves the possession of the true and sole principles of right conduct; but having tried reason, we find her insufficient to guide us in our enquiries after immortality and eternal life, and therefore we gladly embrace Divine Revelation, as being able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The rejection of the Scriptures as the law of God, chiefly arises from the enmity of the carnal mind against God. He is a holy Being; the Scriptures require us to be holy in order to be happy; they also declare that the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of God, and from the glory of his power ; therefore men who love darkness rather than light, labour to disbelieve what they sometimes fear may ultimately prove true.

It is not here intended to be intimated that every man who rejects the Scriptures is grossly immoral ; that is not necessary in order to prove that he is influenced by enmity to God. This enmity often operates, in no small degree, even in those whose outward conduct is sober and decent. Nor is it all at improbable that, in order to conceal the evil of their principles from their own view, and from the view of others, infidels may argue for a decent exterior, and reprobate the conduct of many who call themselves Christians ; judging of Christianity, not from the sacred writings, but from the lives of those who scandalize its very name, they plead the sufficiency of the religion of nature, and would maintain that the Bible is unnecessary. These men of sense, as they affect to call themselves, consider it a mark of weakness to bow to the authority of the Scriptures, and of strength of intellect and of freedom from vulgar prejudices to throw off the fear of death and of future punishment. Yet even some of them have found their courage fail when they approached the verge of eternity, and in their last moments would gladly have exchanged conditions with the poorest and meanest believer in the Son of God. To laugh and to sport, to reject the Scriptures and to despise religion, while death is apparently at a distance, is easy ; but, when it approaches, the mind is appalled. The question, Where am I going ? often rushes upon it with irresistible force, arrests the attention, and awakens the utmost anxiety. We admit, indeed, that some hardy sinners have gone into eternity with seeming indifference, being left to discover their mistake on their entrance into that world from whence there is no return ; but we are sure that to die, refusing to listen to the oracles of truth, is a most awful mistake. To be applauded by their brethren in infidelity for having carried their principles to the utmost length, will neither lessen their guilt, nor ease the pain of everlasting burnings.

Had none but the poor and illiterate embraced Christianity, this might have been a plea for the learned and the rich to reject it; or had none but men of weak natural capacity, or those who had not cultivated their intellectual powers, yielded obedience to the Scriptures, men of strong minds cultivated by learning and science, might with some show of argument have rejected them; but this has not been the case. Many of the most learned and intellectual men have received them, and accounted every other possession as nothing compared with them. They have esteemed the law of God's mouth better than thousands of gold and silver, because it has afforded them more pleasure than any thing earthly could do. The celebrated John Locke, the soundness of whose understanding none can reasonably deny, in laying down the distinct provinces of reason and faith, observes, "that the same truths may be discovered by revelation which are discoverable by reason; that no revelation can be admitted against the clear evidence of reason; that there are many things of which we have but imperfect notions, or none at all, and others of whose past, present, and future existence, by the natural use of our faculties, we cannot have the least knowledge; and these being beyond the discovery of our faculties, and above reason, when revealed become the proper objects of our faith." He then adds, that "our reason is not injured or disturbed, but assisted and improved, by new discoveries of truth coming from the fountain of knowledge. Whatever God has revealed is certainly true, but whether it be a Divine Revelation or not, reason must judge, which can never permit the mind to reject a greater evidence, to embrace what is less evident. Yet (adds this intelligent writer) "it by no means follows that a revelation is to be called in question, because its doctrines are above reason: a revelation would be useless, if it only made known to us truths which we could have discovered by our own unassisted reasoning capacities." Have Deists more understanding than Locke?

There are truths of the greatest importance to man, which reason could not have discovered. Among these we

may reckon the immortality of the soul; the terms on which God will reconcile his offending creatures to himself; the manner in which he chooses to be worshipped; the doctrine of a supernatural influence; the resurrection from the dead; the final judgment; and the eternal condition of the righteous and the wicked. Indeed we cannot say what reason, left to itself, would have discovered that is at all conducive either to the comfort or to the happiness of man. Had not God been pleased to reveal the above truths, we should have been ignorant of them. It may here be observed, that the sinful passions of our nature operate against the light of reason, and render men more vile than they would be if reason were allowed to exercise itself according to its own nature. We often see the prostration of reason to the vicious and debased passions of men, even in our Christian land; but it is much more evident in countries where the light of revelation has not been diffused. It is apparent from the most authentic accounts that we can obtain respecting heathen nations, that the little knowledge of God which their reason, assisted by tradition and the works of creation, would afford, is not esteemed by them. "They do not like to retain God in their knowledge, and therefore he gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

They who reject revelation in favour of reason, exalt her to a degree highly improper; they boast of her power without considering its boundary: they are of all men the most unreasonable. After they have derived truths from the sacred oracles, they ascribe the discovery to reason, and ungratefully cry down those oracles. Having lighted their torch at God's altar, they deny that he has an altar, and affirm that the torch lighted itself. Revelation contains truths which they cannot comprehend, and their pride will not bow to divine instruction: in their opinion nothing can be right which does not square with their reason. "But if God be pleased to make a revelation of his will to mankind, and to point out to them a way of salvation which is entirely new, it is evident that we can in no respect be

judges beforehand what kind of revelation is to be expected, or what sort of truths are likely to be contained in it. We cannot so much as conjecture these things with any appearance of probability, but must wait in patient expectation till the revelation is actually made, because the nature and necessities of man may require a treatment of which we could not conjecture. God's manner of governing the universe of which we are but a very small part, may be utterly beyond the reach and range of our highest apprehension. Hence, when we examine a revelation purporting to come from God, and inquire into the way of salvation made known in it, we should make up our minds to meet with difficulties, and be content to remain ignorant of many things we might wish to have been revealed.

When once we are satisfied with the external evidences of its truth, it is incumbent on us to inquire what *is* the revealed will of God, not what it ought to be, or what it might have been. It becomes us to ask for instruction with humility, and to receive it with reverence. If men will not thus conduct their inquiries, but under the influence of a premature judgment presume to dictate instead of submitting to be taught, God will not accommodate himself to the prejudices of proud men; nor will he new-model his scheme to make it more agreeable to their views. As he first sent the Scriptures to mankind with a certain degree of evidence, and no more, so he has left them; if men neglect them, on whatever plausible pretext, they do it at their peril. Once he has sent forth his word; with the majesty of God he declares, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." (H. Martyn).

We have no dislike to Deists merely as men, but love them for God's sake, and for the sake of their own souls; it is their principles only that we disapprove. With the utmost affection we would inform them that God, in his infinite mercy, has provided a way of salvation in which he is just while he justifies the ungodly; a way which we have found sufficient for ourselves, and which is sufficient for them also. Some who were once infidels have lived to

rejoice in it, having experienced pardon and peace through the blood of the cross. May this be the case with all those who still deny the truth of the Christian religion! Amen.

It must, we conceive, be admitted, even by infidels, that a revelation from God to the children of men is possible. He who made us, and gave us our faculties, certainly has power to instruct us in things peculiar to himself, and also to do it in such a way as he thinks proper: to deny this would be to limit divine power, and to set bounds to omnipotence.

Bolingbroke, though no friend to revelation, has said, that an extraordinary action of God upon the human mind, which the word inspiration is now used to denote, is not more inconceivable than the ordinary action of mind on body, or of body on mind; and that it is impertinent to deny the existence of any phenomenon merely because we cannot account for it.

The circumstances of man when first created, seem to render revelation necessary. He could not know every thing connected with his comfortable existence, without communications from his Maker; and, admitting that God did reveal any thing to him on his first creation, it follows that he is able to do so still, though his circumstances are altered; and also that he is able to accompany that revelation with sufficient evidence of its divine origin.

Since then it will not be denied that it is possible for God to reveal himself to mankind, may we not conclude from the beneficence and goodness of his nature, the proofs of which continually surround us, that he would do so? especially if we consider the misery brought on man by sin. It would seem irreconcilable with the providential goodness of God to man, to suppose that he made him in his own image, and then left him without that instruction which his circumstances required; or that he has suffered him to fall into a condition so lamentable and wretched as that in which he now exists, without revealing to him the way of recovery. Such a supposition would surround the present circumstances of men with an impenetrable gloom. We do not mean to suggest that the Almighty was obliged in

justice to do what he has done for the salvation of men ; this would be to make him a debtor to his creatures, and to destroy the freedom of his grace. But the divine goodness to man in other respects leads us to believe that he would not thus abandon him in his miserable and helpless condition.

Should it be objected that the Old Testament revelation is supposed to have been chiefly given to one family or people, while the rest of mankind were left destitute of it, and that therefore it could answer no material purpose ;— we answer there is no sufficient proof of this. On the contrary, in the first instance it was given to the fathers of mankind without distinction. Otherwise, as Dr. George Campbell observes, how came the division of time into weeks, which obtained at so early a period of the world as we know it did? For instance among the Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, and northern barbarians,—nations, some of whom had little or no intercourse with others. There is a great difference between the concurrence of nations in the division of time into weeks, and their concurrence in other periodical divisions into months and years. The latter arise from such natural causes as are every where obvious; the annual and diurnal revolutions of the sun and the revolutions of the moon: but the division into weeks seems perfectly arbitrary, and has one common origin, which could be nothing else but revelation. Or whence came the traditions concerning the primeval chaos from which the world arose; the production of all living creatures out of water and earth by the efficiency of a supreme mind; the formation of man; his investiture with dominion over all the animals; the primitive state of innocence and happiness; the subsequent degeneracy of mankind; their destruction by a flood; and the preservation of a single family in a vessel? These can be traced to no other source than to revelation originally given to mankind, without the preference intimated in the objection.

If when the nations of the earth had forsaken the worship of the one living and true God, and given themselves over to idolatry, he saw good to take one family into covenant with himself, and to give to them and to their

posterity greater and clearer discoveries of his will than he did to others, we can no more object to this, than we can to many of his ways in providence, concerning which we all have the clearest evidence.

The revelation for which we contend, assures us that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Every man, we doubt not, will be judged according to the knowledge either actually afforded him, or that he might have obtained; and not according to what he neither had nor could acquire.

Again: The goodness of God, as Dr. Doddridge observes, in providing remedies for our bodily diseases, seems to justify the conclusion that he would make some provision for the more fatal diseases of our minds. Without this, mankind are in a worse condition than the brutes that perish. Where then would be the glory of our boasted rationality? But we assert, that this provision is made, and that it is contained in the Bible. Infidelity, with all its pride, affords no such consolation, but leaves us in a hopeless condition, when the present world is for ever withdrawing from our view.

The necessity of revelation is also evinced by the mazes in which those have wandered who have preferred to it their own speculations. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Philosophy has done nothing towards satisfying the vast desires of mankind, or giving them a sure foundation on which to rest their hope of immortality. Endless differences prevailed among learned men in the heathen world, respecting the character of God. Some of them taught doctrines that tended to promote vice and immorality, and they generally sanctioned and defended the religion of the state where they happened to reside; which things they could not have done, had they understood the perfections of the infinitely blessed God.

The ancient Romans, with all their knowledge, influenced by political principles, are said to have adopted the gods of the nations whom they conquered in battle, and seemed desirous of perpetuating their fame to distant ages by crowding them all into their Pantheon.

What but a revelation from God could rescue man from such profound ignorance, idolatry, and misery? The

philosophers themselves confessed this. "You may," says Socrates, "give over all hopes of amending men's lives for the future, unless God be pleased to send you some other person to instruct you." Plato declares, that "whatever is right and as it should be in the present evil state of the world, can only be so by the particular interposition of God." Cicero has made similar declarations; and Porphyry, who was a most inveterate enemy to the Christian religion, confesses that there was wanting some universal method of delivering men's souls, which no sect of philosophers had ever yet discovered. (Bishop Porteus.)

If it be said that revelation has not effected a cure for the moral disorders of men, and that it has not united them concerning the subjects on which it treats, we admit it, but maintain that this is not the fault of revelation, but of those to whom it is given. They follow the desires of their own heart, to the neglect of its plainest dictates; instead of listening to the voice of God, and obeying his authority, they yield themselves to the influence of their own evil passions, and the temptations of Satan. Truly pious and holy men of all denominations of Christians agree on the leading particulars of revelation; and we hesitate not to say, that unless God perform a miracle upon their minds, it is impossible, in the present imperfect state, that they should do more.

In the following sections, we shall argue from the various topics which tend to prove the reality and importance of the Christian revelation. We may however assert our belief in its truth and excellency, and even contend for both, without participating in the blessings it imparts. The word of God must be received into our hearts, and become there the seed of holy living; it must be as a mirror in which to behold the glory of the Lord, that we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, or it will do us no real good, but fearfully aggravate our condemnation. What is revelation to thee, my soul? dost thou esteem it more than thousands of gold and silver? Hast thou believed its doctrines, obeyed its precepts, and rejoiced in its promises? If thou art a Christian, this is thy happy experience.

SECTION I.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES AND MIRACLES.

Having made some preliminary observations for the purpose of showing the probability of a divine revelation being given to man, we shall now enter more particularly into the arguments on this subject.

And here let it be observed,

1. That we do not imagine that every part of the sacred writings manifests an equal degree of divine inspiration. "In some parts there appears more of God than in others. There are things which could not have been written, had not the Holy Spirit dictated them to the writers. As, for instance, when the prophets predicted the events of futurity, or the apostles of Christ made known the glories of redemption, it was God speaking in them; they were only instruments to communicate his will. But when Moses related the miracles performed in Egypt, or the evangelists related different parts of the history of Christ, they say nothing but what they had the means of knowing without that special influence which was necessary on other occasions;" yet, as these events were recorded some time after their occurrence, we believe that the writers, in reporting them, were preserved from error.

2. A distinction should be made between what God has spoken in his word, and what is there recorded as spoken by men.

In his word we read the following expressions; "It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?" (Mal. iii. 14). "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." (1 Cor. xv. 32). "After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day." (Job iii. 1). The first of which was spoken by the Jews, who thought the time spent in the service of God entirely lost. They wanted wordly advantage, and could not approve of any service that did not turn to that account. The second is

the favourite maxim of the sensualist. The apostle used it, not as his own language, but merely to show that if there were no resurrection of the dead, instead of encountering the dangers he did encounter in the service of Christ, he might as well say as they did, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But he knew that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust; and therefore he endured the trials he met with in the service of his Master with patience and fortitude. The last of these passages is the language of Job, when, in the anguish of his soul, he spake unadvisedly with his lips. His condition was truly painful; yet, being a sinner against God, he ought to have borne it with patience. The same remark might be made on many other passages of the sacred oracles; yet this is no objection to their inspiration, but is rather an argument for it; human character being hereby developed in a manner it could not have been, except by him who knows the heart. Had nothing but purity and perfection been mentioned in the sacred writings, they could not have been so useful as they now are. Things of this kind being stated in them, have a tendency to encourage sinners to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near; and also to keep saints from that despair into which they might otherwise fall.

3. If it be objected that a revelation made to one man can be no revelation to another; we answer, that it must be made either to certain individuals only, chosen to instruct others, or else to every one for whose benefit it was intended. But what reasonable objection can there be to the former of these methods? For, admitting the reality of such revelation, and that sufficient evidence of its truth is given, unless there be a criminal opposition to it, the belief of the doctrines and facts which it contains, and obedience to the ordinances which it enjoins, are binding upon all men to whom it is made known.

Deists do not hesitate to give credit to many things the truth of which is not so well established as that of revelation; and not only they, but ourselves also. Should we deny what history records respecting the ancient government of Greece

or Rome, we should be accounted sceptics, and suspected of deficiency in intellect; but they reject the word of God, and yet wish to pass for sensible men; yea, almost for the only men of sense and intelligence. Must we believe that there were such men as Plato, Socrates, and Seneca; or as Alexander, Pompey, and Cæsar; and that they were philosophers, warriors, and conquerors; and not believe that there were such men as Moses and the prophets, and Jesus Christ and the apostles? No, we believe in the existence of the latter, upon a much better foundation than we do in that of the former; our faith in the one case resting on the credit of men, but in the other on the testimony of God.

If we reduce the sacred history to a level with that of our own country, and then apply to it the principles of Deism, the inconsistency of Deists will be apparent. They believe that England was invaded by Julius Cæsar; that it was conquered by the Normans; that the instrument called Magna Charta, which laid the foundation of English liberty, was signed by king John. But why do they believe these things? they were not witnesses of them, any more than of the facts stated in the sacred records. The only reason is, that history has recorded them. But more faithful historians than any who have written the history of England, have recorded the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with an account of his apostles, the miracles they wrought, the doctrines they preached, and the duties they enjoined; yet Deists reject these as fabulous. And why do they do so? The only answer is, Because, if Christianity be true, they are in a most dangerous error, their own consciences being judges.

The first argument we shall offer to show that the Scriptures are a divine revelation, is, the account deduced from them of the origin of worshipping God by offering to him ANIMAL SACRIFICES. If there was no revelation made to men in the early ages of the world by which they were taught this mode of worship, we ask, How came it to pass that they should act thus? and also, How came the legislators and governors of heathen nations to be so fully per-

suaded that there was such a revelation, as to make appointments in religion, and pretend to establish and support them by its authority? Should it be replied that they received the notion of offering animal sacrifices by tradition, we still put the question, How could men imagine that these sacrifices would be acceptable to God, unless he had first made the discovery? Such an institution is not known as having originated in the heathen world: it was, therefore, in all probability, derived from the fathers of mankind. They would teach it to their posterity, and it would descend from one generation to another, until the worship of God was corrupted by human devices, through which men "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." God in his infinite goodness having determined in the fulness of time to send his Son into the world, to be a propitiation for the sins of mankind, did, as we conceive, immediately after the fall of our first parents, appoint the creatures to be offered by way of figure to represent his death, as an atonement for sin, and to teach posterity to look forward to his appearing.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Had there been no divine appointment, how could Abel have offered in faith? Faith requires a revelation, including a command and a promise; it obeys the one, and hopes in the other. On this principle the faith of the Old Testament worthies is celebrated; they obeyed what God had commanded, and hoped for what he had promised. But had there been no command respecting animal oblations, nor any promise of the seed of the woman, who was thus represented, there could have been neither obedience nor hope.

Both Cain and Abel brought an offering to the Lord; but Cain brought only of the fruit of the ground, and presented it as though there had been no breach between him and his Maker. Whereas Abel, understanding the effects

of the Fall, obeyed the command, hoped in the mercy of God, and brought a sacrifice expressive of his faith. If we admit this account of the origin of sacrificing the creatures, we see a propriety in the procedure, and have a good reason why they were thus offered. But if we reject it, no account can be given how an institution which spread through so many countries, and continued for so many ages, came into use. Let Deists, if they can, show us a more probable account of the origin of this practice.

“The heathens had no true notion of the origin of sacrifices. They were received and established in all countries as positive institutions, and the philosophers were ready to prove them a reasonable service, or a service according to the dictates of natural reason; but thinking they could give a better account of inanimate oblations, than of bloody sacrifices, they imagined the former to be the most ancient, and that the others were in time added to them. There is no heathen writer that I know of who has gone so far as to assert expressly that sacrifices were at first of human invention, or who has proved that such a worship could have been invented by man. Had human reason been the sole guide in religious matters, kings and rulers of heathen nations would never have thought of enforcing their institutions of religion by the idea of a revelation from heaven; nor would the people have received them as by that authority; but revelation being generally believed to be the foundation of all religion, when the rulers of the people added their own inventions to the religious rites of their predecessors, they made use of this belief, and appointed those additions, as coming from the gods. To this the people assented, not as being artfully betrayed into the belief of it, but thinking that their rulers were inspired by Almighty God, they yielded obedience to their commands, and in this way was accomplished that load of ceremonies known to be practised in the heathen world.” (Shuckford).

It is highly unreasonable for Deists in the present day to attempt to give another, and a better account of this than their brethren in the heathen world. It can no otherwise

be truly and satisfactorily accounted for, than by that emphatic declaration, " Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

The second consideration I shall offer in favour of a divine revelation, is, that MIRACLES were wrought to confirm the truth of it.

Miracles are effects either above the course of nature, or contrary to it, wrought by the power of God to give credit to a messenger sent by him.

The visible world is governed by general laws ; a series of causes and effects is established in every part of it. Whatever is produced by the regular operation of these laws, or is conformable to them, is properly called natural ; whatever is opposed to them, or which evidently rises above them, is miraculous. Before any effect can be pronounced a true miracle, the circumstances under which it was produced must be known, and the course of nature in them fully understood. If we are ignorant of these, it is impossible to determine what is, or what is not, a miracle. We should not therefore imagine that any event is miraculous, merely because we are unable to account for it, since it may be nothing more than a regular effect of some law of nature unknown to us. Were a physician, for instance, to cure a blind man of a cataract by anointing his eyes with a chemical preparation which we had never seen, and with the nature of which we were altogether unacquainted, the cure would be wonderful ; but we could not pronounce it miraculous, because, for any thing we could tell, it might be only the natural effect of the unguent on the eye. But were he to cure him by commanding him to see, or by anointing his eyes with spittle, we should know at once that it was miraculous, since neither the human voice, nor spittle, has, by the established laws of nature, any power over the diseases of the eye.

We have heard that many persons, after they have been apparently dead, being treated according to the directions of the Humane Society for the recovery of drowned persons, have been restored to their friends. This would seem miraculous to one unacquainted with the process of resusci-

tation ; while a person who understood that process would know that it was only the effect of natural causes. But should we see a person who had lain in the grave four days, come forth at the call of another, or one who had exhibited all the symptoms of death instantly revive, and possess perfect health and strength, at the word of another, we should know that we had witnessed a miracle. The laws of nature being established by infinite wisdom and goodness, a deviation from these laws would not be suffered to establish a falsehood, or to give authority to an impostor. (See *Pantologia* ; word, *MIRACLE*).

When religious truths above the comprehension of human reason are made known, the person by whom they are communicated must convince us that he is commissioned by the Almighty for that very purpose. If he work miracles, we receive him as a messenger from God, and subject our reason to what he declares. But Moses and the Prophets, and Jesus Christ and his Apostles, made known truths of this kind, and confirmed them by miracles ; they must, therefore, be received as the messengers of Heaven.

The miracles wrought by Moses in the land of Egypt, and in the wilderness, not only confirmed the truths he taught, but were accompanied with such displays of divine power, that Pharaoh and all his subjects were ultimately convinced that it was in vain to oppose. It is true the miraculous power imparted to Moses was imitated by the magicians, which in our opinion they did by the influence of familiar spirits, who on that occasion were suffered to change the appearances of the subjects on which they operated, or suddenly to convey away one thing, and to substitute another in its place. To the observers of this contest the authority by which Moses acted, and that of the magicians, might for a while seem nearly equal ; but at length the magicians were obliged to confess the finger of God. And even this opposition might have various and beneficial effects. The notion of such an extraordinary art as that of magic, prevailed not only among the Egyptians, but also in other nations : this contest, however, would convince all who heard of it of the difference be-

tween the power of the magicians and that of Jehovah. Moses would also hereby be cleared of the suspicion of being himself a magician; a circumstance which must be of importance in his character. The faith of the Israelites in divine power was confirmed by this victory over the magic art, and it would be spoken of by their posterity with peculiar interest. Nor can we tell but that even some of the Egyptians might be so far convinced by these manifestations of divine power, as afterwards to renounce idolatry, and to serve the living God. This is probable; for it is said, that "he that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into their houses; and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field." God is often known by the judgments of his hand: in every operation of his power his design is to make the inhabitants of the earth adore and fear him. The whole nation of Israel believed that Moses wrought miracles in the land of Egypt, that he conducted them through the Red Sea, that he fed them with manna in the wilderness, and that he instituted the feast of the passover to commemorate in all their coasts that dreadful night when God passed over their houses, and slew the first born of Egypt. These things were not only believed by the generation who witnessed them, but by all the succeeding generations of that nation, and are firmly believed by them at the present time. We ask Deists, At what period of the Jewish history could the account of these miracles have been invented, and imposed upon that people? The same question may be asked with respect to the miracles wrought by Joshua and the prophets. Could that whole nation assent to the performance of religious rites and ceremonies which had no authority? Could they be persuaded that forged books, of which they had never heard before, were the ancient records of their fathers and of their nation? Such an occurrence in any country was never heard of, and never will be. They who can suppose it took place in the Israelitish nation, must not renounce the doctrine of miracles; for this would be as great a miracle as any re-

corded in the sacred writings. But if this occurrence did not take place, we have a revelation from heaven.

The miracles wrought by Jesus Christ and his apostles were so transcendent in their nature, and divine in their manner; so full in their evidence, and so correspondent to the prophecies contained in the Old Testament; that to deny them savours much more of enmity of heart against God, than it can possibly do of sound reason. They opened the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf; they caused the lame to walk, and restored withered limbs to their natural use; they also raised the dead, before numerous witnesses, some of whom were their avowed enemies, who, had there been any possible way to escape the conclusion drawn from them, would not have failed to discover it. If they were doubtful of one miraculous fact, a second would lessen their doubts; a third would still further diminish it; and a fourth would remove all suspicion. How then could any hesitation remain in the minds of those who witnessed the varied and numerous miracles wrought by Jesus of Nazareth? This made them ask with astonishment, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man doeth?" It was well understood among them, that Christ did work miracles. The leaders of the nation confessed it. "Then gathered the chief priests and the pharisees a council, and said, What do we, for this man doeth many miracles? If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him." Nor have the Jews attempted to deny that he, whom the Christians receive as the Christ of God, wrought miracles; but they have fabricated a story, endeavouring to account for the power by which he wrought them. This is recorded in their books, and is still believed among them. The story says, that he performed his miracles by the name *Jehovah*, which was written on a stone placed in the Holy of Holies, which name whoever learned from that writing, would thereby be able to perform real miracles; but that lest curious young men should do this, and by their miracles bring devastation on the world, there were two brazen lions placed at the entrance, which had the power of roaring to such a degree when any one went

in thither to learn the sacred name, that in his fright, occasioned by this roaring, he always forgot it, and thus his intention was defeated. They say also that Jesus came to Jerusalem, and by magical art, and the power of the devil, got into the holy place, and, learning the sacred name, wrote it on a parchment, and concealed it under his skin; and that, when he came out, the lions roared and he forgot it; but that he retired to Bethlehem, cut open the skin of that part of the body where he had concealed the parchment, perfectly learned the name, and by it wrought his miracles. (See the Seventh Demonstration Sermon preached to the Jews, by Joseph Kinghorn.)

To say nothing of the roaring of brazen lions, in itself incredible, the whole of this story confutes the end the Jews have in relating it. There is however one remark we may make upon it, namely, that with all the hatred they manifest to Jesus, they do not go the length which Deists do. They acknowledge that he did work miracles; but Deists deny it, thereby not only endeavouring to invalidate the Christian scriptures, but also the accounts preserved among the Jews concerning the Founder of our holy religion. The Apostles of Christ wrought miracles in his name and by his power; but he wrought them by his own power, displaying, in his manner of working them, a dignity and majesty peculiar to himself. When he raised the dead, he had only to say, "Lazarus, come forth—Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" and his voice penetrated the regions of death; the dead obeyed his call. On other occasions he acted with the same authority, so that they who beheld his wonderful works were beyond measure astonished, saying, "He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

He also instituted two ordinances, Baptism and the Sacred Supper; the former to be observed by his followers in obedience to his authority, and the latter in commemoration of his sufferings and death. These have been observed in his church to the present time; and, as at no period of the Jewish nation the account of the miracles of Moses, Joshua, and the prophets could have been fabricated

and imposed upon that people, so at no period of the Christian church could these ordinances be imposed on Christians, as originating with Jesus Christ, if they had not originated with him. And we call upon Deists to show us, if they can, how Christian baptism and the Lord's supper came into the church otherwise than by his institution. At what time, and by what person, were they first introduced? By what power were the minds of Christians influenced all at once to believe in them, and to practise them upon the basis of an imposition, as though it were true? Christians too of various denominations, and in far distant countries? The very supposition is absurd.

These ordinances place Jesus Christ at the head of his followers, and present him to us as giving them laws with the majesty of a king, when, to all outward appearance, in a very little time his cause must be buried in oblivion, and his name be entirely forgotten. In the lowest stage of his humiliation, the very night in which he was betrayed, he instituted his last supper. In the midst of apparent weakness, he exercised a power and prerogative peculiarly his own. In the immediate prospect of his sufferings, with unaffected dignity, he enjoined his followers to commemorate his death. Had he been an impostor, they must have despised his orders, and insulted his mock majesty. But they knew he was no impostor. As *he* was conscious of his own dignity, so *they* were convinced that he came from heaven. Also when he arose from the dead, he gave his apostles their commission, in which he enjoined Christian baptism on all his followers till the end of the world. But if we cannot believe that he was an impostor; that all his miracles were a delusion, and the whole of his religion a cheat; we must believe that in time past God spake to the fathers by the prophets, and that in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son; and consequently that we have a divine revelation.

SECTION II.

PROPHECY.

The next argument I shall advance for the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, is that which arises from the accomplishment of the principal prophecies contained in them. As God only knows with certainty future events, it follows that when men have been enabled to foretell them, it affords a proof of their inspiration. From this consideration the systems of false religion have in general pretended to this evidence of their truth. As there is scarcely any thing among men, however pure, which has not been counterfeited, so it has happened with prophecy. But, as the existence of counterfeits proves the existence of that which they imitate, so it is in this instance. Had God never made communications to men of what would take place in future ages, it is not likely that any persons would have pretended to this discernment: the experience of mankind would have been against them. But it being generally acknowledged that this has been the case, the devotees of superstition have laid claim to this privilege. There were false prophets in the Jewish nation, even as there are false teachers among Christians. This made it necessary that the Jews should have a rule by which to judge of true prophets, and also for Christians to have explicit directions by which to estimate the characters of those who pretend to teach Christianity.

These criteria were graciously given; and though, like the Jews, Christians may be deceived for a time, in most instances character will, to those who observe it, soon become evident; the artifice and disparity, which human depravity is able to assume, cannot long conceal the state of a mind at enmity with God.

The gift of prophecy was not confined to the Jewish nation, nor always imparted to holy men. Balaam was a heathen, and an immoral character; he loved the

wages of unrighteousness, and ran greedily after rewards. The Saviour declares, that in the last day many will say unto him, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? to whom he will say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." This, as well as every other gift of God, is at his own disposal; if he bestow it upon bad men, and the reasons thereof be inexplicable by us, we can have no doubt that he is influenced by wisdom and goodness.

To form a right judgment of this argument, we must not consider the prophecies as independent of each other, but enquire whether the notices which God gave to the prophets of his intended salvation, were perfectly answered in the gospel dispensation. If the prophecies are taken separately, the argument is weakened; because some of them may admit of an application to other characters than to that of Jesus Christ. The prophecy contained in the xxxiid chap. of Isaiah may be applied to king Hezekiah, as well as to the Messiah. This observation is also applicable to some others. They should therefore be considered as a connected chain, the links of which reach from the first to the last of all the events foretold in them.

It may be further observed, that this evidence is cumulative. Within the last half century, the gospel, as was foretold should be the case in the last days, has been preached to many nations, which before were in a state of moral darkness. Idolatry and superstition have been overturned, and, as the inspired writers also foretell, they who were formerly heathens have cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, and have received the oracles of God as the only sure guide in faith and practice.

If the same degree of divine influence shall continue to accompany the moral means made use of by the different denominations of Christians that has accompanied those means of late years, the knowledge of the Lord in no very great distance of time will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

In this respect we who live in the present day have the advantage of those who lived many centuries before us. Things which then were only foretold have since been ful-

filled, and are still fulfilling; what to them was matter of faith, is to us matter of sight.

It would be improper in short statements like these to notice at large the evidence, arising from the accomplishment of prophecy, in favour of a divine revelation; this has been done by many able writers, especially by Bishop Newton. Yet we shall briefly state certain particulars which appear so clear and convincing, that they cannot be mistaken by an ingenuous mind.

First. The prophecies respecting the Messiah are numerous, pointed, and particular, and are evidently accomplished in the history of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament.

The expectation of the Messiah continued without interval from the beginning of the world. He was promised to the first man immediately after the fall, as the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head. It was revealed to Abraham that he should descend from him by a son of his who was then unborn. Jacob said that his son Judah should be his direct ancestor. Moses described him as a prophet, whom God would raise up to the Israelites like unto himself, invested with authority to demand their obedience, and to punish their disobedience with the most awful consequences.

After this God raised up a succession of prophets during a period of sixteen hundred years, who all foretold his coming; and for four subsequent centuries he scattered their prophecies, with the Jews who possessed them, among the nations of the earth, as preparatory to his advent; for, as the gospel was to be received by those nations, it was requisite not only that there should be prophecies to render it credible, but that those prophecies should be diffused among them in order that they might believe it.

If one individual only had predicted the coming of the Messiah, with the particular events of his life and death, and he had come, and things had happened in accordance thereto, the proof of his divine mission and character would have been very powerful. How great then must that proof be, when we have so many prophets, all uniting and combining their testimony concerning him, with an account of

the events of his life and death, all of which took place exactly as predicted!

It was foretold that he should establish a new covenant, which should cause the Jews to forget their departure out of Egypt (Jer. xxiii. 7.) This was accomplished to those of that nation who believed on him; their redemption from sin and its consequences, being far more glorious than their former deliverances, and more fully developing the perfections of the divine nature. It was also foretold that he should write his law, not on an exterior tablet, but on the hearts of his people (Jer. xxxi. 33.) creating in them a judgment, disposition, and affections, congenial to that law.—That the Jews would be faithless, ungrateful, and incredulous; an unbelieving and gainsaying people (Isaiah lxv. 2.)—That God would smite them with blindness, and that they should stumble like blind men at noon day (Deut. xxviii.)—That the church should be small at its commencement, like water issuing from under the threshold of a house; but that in the end it should become a river which could not be forded (Ezek. xvii. 1. 12.)—That the temples and images of the heathen should be caused to cease, and that in every place a pure offering should be offered to the Lord, which should be acceptable to him through the intercession of that great High Priest whom he should appoint (Mal. i.)—That the Messiah should teach men the perfect way, and that the law should go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah ii. 3.) which was fulfilled by his apostles beginning to preach at that devoted city. That the Messiah should be King both of Jews and Gentiles (Psal. ii. vi. viii. lxxii.)—That he should have a forerunner to prepare his way, and announce his approach. (Mal. iii. 1.)—This was John the Baptist, to whom the prophecy is applied in the New Testament.—That he should be born as an infant, and in Bethlehem (Isaiah ix. 6. Micah v. 2.)—That he should spring from the family of David; should open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame to walk (Is. xxxv.) all of which he evidently did, while he tabernacled with man upon earth.—That he should be the precious corner stone; a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the inhabitants

of Jerusalem ; against which they should stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and taken (Is. xxviii. xvi. viii. 14, 15.)—That the Jewish builders would reject him, but that God would make him the head stone of the corner (Psalm cxviii. 22.)—That he should be betrayed and sold (Psalm xl. 9. Zech. xi. 12.) be mocked and afflicted in many different ways ; and that they would give him gall to drink (Psalm lxix.)—That they should pierce his hands, and feet, and cast lots upon his vesture (Psalm xxii. 16. 18.)—That he should rise from the dead on the third day, ascend into heaven, and sit down on the right hand of God (Psalm xxii. and cx.)—That all kings should fall down before him, and all nations should worship him (Psalm lxx.) That he would be glorious, powerful, and mighty. That the Jews who denied and crucified him should be his people no longer. That the Gentiles believing in him should be saved.—That, notwithstanding the Jewish nation should be no longer his peculiar people, they should still exist distinct and separate from all other people ; wandering about without a prince, without a sacrifice, without an altar, and without prophets ; looking for their Messiah, but looking in vain.—Nor are these all the prophecies which have a specific reference to him, who was to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness : many more might be quoted, but these may suffice on the present occasion. If it should be said, that so many and such explicit references to the Messiah in the Scriptures must have induced the Jews to receive him, it may be replied, that their rejection of him, strange as it may appear, was also predicted, so that this very circumstance proves the truth of the prophecies, and confirms their divine authority.

What will infidels do with such an assemblage of predictions, delivered at periods of time so distant from each other, and by men so vastly different in their situations ? Will they dispose of them by declaring that they were written after the events took place, and so are no prophecies at all ? This certainly will save them the trouble of attempting to answer the argument they supply, or of showing their application to other objects. But who would not perceive the reason of this conduct ? Even their own

minds could scarcely be blinded by such means. We wish them to account for events which they must admit have taken place in accordance with these predictions, and to show us what other reason can be assigned why these events took place at all. They were not only extraordinary in themselves, but in their consequences also, which consequences remain to this time. Admit the truth of revelation, and all is accounted for; deny it, and we are in complete darkness,—a darkness which all the pretended wisdom and boldness of infidelity cannot dissipate, but which the Christian religion disperses, opening a way to everlasting happiness, and inviting men of every description to seek that happiness.

Secondly. In the Scriptures are foretold the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and the present dispersed state of the Jews.

Jesus Christ was not only the great subject of prophecy, but was himself a prophet, giving ample proof of his divine authority by prophecies as well as by miracles. Moses described him under this character. “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him (Deut. xviii. 18.) This by the apostles was applied to Christ, and was eminently fulfilled in him. Nor was there ever any person in the Jewish nation besides him, who so much and in so many points resembled Moses. He was however his superior; he was “counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.” He excelled in all spiritual gifts; the Spirit was given to him without measure. Moses was a servant; Christ was a son.

1. The destruction of the temple.—“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” (Mat. xxiv.) The Jewish temple at the time Christ delivered this prophecy was to all appearance likely to continue in the state it then was for

many ages, unless something should unexpectedly occur to deface its beauty, or demolish any part of it; and we can hardly imagine that any thing in the common course of nature could so completely overthrow it as is here foretold, especially in the short time between the prediction and the event; nevertheless it literally came to pass.

When the Romans had taken Jerusalem, Titus ordered his soldiers to plough up the very foundations of both the city and temple. These events are fully and clearly stated by Josephus, the Jewish historian, with many more particulars equally illustrative of the truth of this prophecy.

2. The dispersion of the Jews.—It was foretold by our Lord, that many of the Jews on the occasion of their city and temple being destroyed should fall by the edge of the sword; that others of them should be led away captive into all nations; and that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. (Luke xxi. 24.) Accordingly we are informed, that more than a million of them were slain; and it is evident to all men, that to this day they are scattered among the nations of the earth, mixing with all people and yet identified with none. While the greatest nations have disappeared, or have been blended and lost amongst other nations, the Jews, through the operation of divine providence, have kept themselves distinct. They have abode many days without a king, without an image, without an ephod, and without teraphim. If it be asked why the seed of Abraham are suffered so long to remain in their present state of dispersion and darkness, an answer is supplied by the awful justice of God, which in inflicting these evils punishes that worst and most flagrant crime of their nation, the rejection of his beloved Son. Their blindness is judicial; but when they shall turn to the Lord, it shall be taken away, and so all Israel shall be saved.

Jesus Christ not only prophesied of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, but also predicted his own death and resurrection; that he should be betrayed by one of his disciples, and be forsaken by them all; the persecutions his followers should endure in his cause, and

that their number should increase as a little seed groweth into a great tree ; all of which predictions have been fulfilled, or are now fulfilling in the world.

Thirdly. The prophecy of the apostle Paul respecting that great apostasy which has arisen in the Christian church, the Romish hierarchy, proves the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

“ In the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians the apostle uses expressions concerning the end of the world, the coming of Christ, and the day of judgment, which they understood as indicating that these events were very near. In his second epistle to them he corrects this mistake, and thus cautions them ; ‘ Let no man deceive you by any means : for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’ The apostle also mentions this apostasy in his first epistle to Timothy, and specifies some other things as the signs of it, such as, the doctrine of demons, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.” (See Dr. Paley’s Evidences.)

This mystery of iniquity had begun to work in the apostle’s time ; but the Roman empire being then very powerful, it could not proceed. That which hindered must be taken out of the way, before that wicked could be revealed, whom the Lord would consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and would destroy with the brightness of his coming. As the Roman empire declined, the mystery of iniquity increased, till at length the bishop of Rome took to himself titles and honours which plainly marked him out as the head of this grand apostasy. “He was styled our Lord God the pope, another God upon earth ; King of kings, and Lord of lords. The same is the dominion of God and the pope. Accordingly he deposed kings and set up kings, degraded the monarchs of earthly kingdoms to the lowest and meanest offices, to aggrandize himself, and to spread the influence of his spiritual authority. The advocates of popery

declared, that the power of the pope reached to things in heaven, earth, and hell: it is said by them that the pope doeth whatever he pleaseth, and that he is more than God." (Bp. Newton.)

We are aware that these passages in the writings of the apostle Paul have been differently interpreted by men of different religious communities, but there is nothing to which their application is so appropriate as to the church of Rome. In this church they have been accomplished in all their parts; the living features have been plainly recognised in the picture, and in our opinion the more they are considered and compared with their antitype, the stronger will the likeness appear.

This view of the grand apostasy is in unison with the prophecy of Daniel, and the tradition of the primitive church; and is not only a proof of the inspiration of the sacred writings, but it serves also as an excellent antidote to the poison of popery, the harmlessness of which has of late years been so strongly contended for by some who mistake its true nature.

We might here argue from the prophecies of the Old Testament respecting Ishmael, Jacob, and Esau; from those of Moses concerning the Jewish nation; and also from those of other prophets that foretell the fall of Egypt, of Babylon, of Tyre, and of Nineveh, all of which have been fulfilled, though there were no human appearances of the fall of those powerful cities when the prophets foretold it.

Fourthly. The effect of the gospel ministry upon the human mind is clearly predicted in the Scriptures.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." (Isaiah xi. 6, 7.) This language denotes that persons of the most dissimilar dispositions and pursuits, and addicted to various kinds of wickedness, would be

united in the service of God; that the selfish and the rapacious, the contentious and the savage, would, under the gospel dispensation, be enabled to subdue their unholy passions, become harmless and peaceful, benevolent and kind, and that they would live with each other in harmony, being united by the bond of Christian affection.

This prophecy has been fulfilled in many instances, but in none more evidently than in the apostle Paul. Before he felt the influence of the gospel, he persecuted the disciples of Christ with great fury; his very breath was threatening and slaughter against them; nothing would have pleased him more than to extirpate them from the face of the earth. But, when subdued by divine grace, he was as ardently and as zealously attached to Christ and his cause, and to his ways and his people, as he had before been bitter against them. He preached the faith which once he destroyed; he was content to bear persecution and tribulation for the honour of Christ, and he cheerfully spent his time and his strength in promoting the increase of the church. He did not even count his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Glorious change! how rich and free was the grace that produced it!

His ministry was eminently useful for the conversion of souls; in most, if not in all places, it was attended with divine energy. At Corinth, a place where pride, luxury, lewdness, and idolatry reigned, a Christian church was formed, that came behind no other in gifts and in grace, to which church he afterwards wrote a first and a second epistle, wherein he reminded them of what they were before he went amongst them. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?—And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

At Thessalonica, "Paul, as his manner was, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and three Sabbath days reasoned

with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that Jesus whom he preached unto them was the Christ." At this the Jews were moved with envy, and excited a persecution against him; nevertheless a church was raised in that city. The gospel came to them not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. They turned from idols to the living God; and the work of faith and the patience of hope were displayed in them. The very men who had been devoted to idols became the apostle's joy and crown of rejoicing, in the prospect of Christ's coming to judge the world. This was the case also at Ephesus: notwithstanding the opposition of the priests of idolatry, the word of God grew, and mightily prevailed.

The gospel is a fountain that can never be exhausted, and whose streams enrich and fertilize all places where they come. Nor are spiritual and eternal blessings the only advantages derived from it; civil and religious liberty follow in its train. The nations where it has been received are distinguished from others by science, by learning, and by liberty.

What is it, we ask, that has given to our own country such an ascendancy among the nations of the world, but the gospel? It is not because we are naturally better than others, or that we have been thus elevated from the commencement of our existence as a nation. Had it not been for the light of revelation, Druidism and human sacrifices would still have prevailed in our land, and the worship of the living God would not have been understood by its inhabitants.

By these various methods God has rendered the truth and inspiration of his word indubitably clear and certain. A perverted mind only can overlook these evidences, and a depraved heart neglect and contemn them. The sovereign power of God is seen in the miracles therein recorded; his omniscience in its prophecies; his holiness in its laws; his wisdom in its adaptation to accomplish his purposes; his providence in its propagation; and not only one but many of the divine perfections are illustrated in the life of his incarnate Son; benevolence, long-suffering, wisdom, holiness,

and truth. The very evidences therefore of the Christian religion bear the impression of the divine nature irradiating them, and thus they coincide with the design of that religion itself, wherein the Divine Being, in the exercise of these his perfections, is proposed to us as the object of faith, with its consequent affections and duties.

SECTION III.

THE MORALITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

In enquiring into the evidences of divine revelation, we are not like persons who travel through a desert country, where there is nothing either to please or to profit them; but like those who travel in a way where the objects are beautiful to the eye, and instructive to the mind; and where the scene is occasionally picturesque and sublime; affording the most delightful contemplations on the works of nature; and being adapted to lead the mind to nature's God.

In this enquiry we are charmed with the variety and force of the evidences by which our faith is confirmed, and our hope of immortality strengthened: we are not only fortified against the insidious attacks of infidelity, but also against the allurements of the world, and the temptations of Satan.

The more some theories are examined, the more doubtful they become. A thorough investigation of their principles shows their insufficiency. One theory of astronomy has succeeded to another, and one system of philosophy has subverted another: future astronomers and philosophers may show the inconclusive nature of what is now thought to be undoubted truth. This however is not the case with Christianity; its doctrines and precepts originated with him with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; they are founded on his eternal purposes, and are as immutable as the rectitude of his nature.

It is impossible to suppose another system of doctrines and precepts more pure in their nature, or more congenial with the circumstances of man, more suited to display the perfections of God, or to glorify his name, than that of Christianity.

Yet the Bible, in which this system is recorded, has been violently opposed. Infidels have done all they could to weaken its authority, and to lessen its value; but their efforts have indirectly tended to increase that value in the estimation of good men, by bringing forth its most able advocates, who have abundantly shown the weakness and sophistry of infidelity, and the pre-eminent importance of the sacred oracles.

It may be noticed also that infidels most frequently direct their attacks at what they *imagine* to be Christianity, and not against Christianity itself. Judging by the lives of many who profess to be Christians, they estimate it accordingly; or, they make the conduct of Christian nations, a criterion by which to judge of their religion. But have these workers of iniquity no knowledge of this fallacy? They have; and they would not adopt it in any other case; but they must endeavour by all means to overcome that which is utterly opposed to them. If Christianity be true, they know what follows in reference to themselves, and therefore any mode of warfare must be justified if it help them in the dreadful extremity. Christianity should be viewed as found in the sacred oracles, and not as delineated in the lives of its professors; for though some men, influenced by its real spirit, exemplify its doctrines and precepts to a good degree, yet the best of men readily confess that they fall short of fully exhibiting its moral beauties. By this mode of argument there is nothing however useful but may be reasoned out of the world. Would Deists prefer an uncivilized state of society to that of civilization? Yet civilized nations have been plunged into war and bloodshed. But as this has been chargeable to the evil passions of men, and not to their civil state; so the immoralities of professing Christians, either as individuals, or as nations, must not be placed to the account of Christianity, but to the absence of it. Chris-

tianity breathes nothing but good will to mankind ; and, were all men actuated by it, war would be banished out of the world, and earth would resemble heaven.

A book coming from God, intended to instruct his rational though fallen creatures, in justice and truth, and to prepare them for the enjoyment of himself, must necessarily contain principles of pure morality.

If upon examination the Old and New Testaments do not contain and enforce such principles, we may reject them. But if they do contain them, and if they do enforce them upon the attention of mankind, they are worthy of our serious regard, the exercise and influence of morality being necessary even for the well-being and good order of civil society.

Here it should be observed, that to form a right judgment on this subject, we should read both Testaments seriously and candidly through. To fix upon expressions or clauses detached from the connection in which they stand, as a ground of objection against their morality, discovers a mind desirous of finding fault. This however has been the conduct of infidels: what they have deemed the objectionable parts of revelation have been retailed by them from one to another without examination ; their observations and comments upon them have also been frequently given, as though they originated with the writer himself, although they have descended from one generation to another, and have been again and again refuted. If to give a pure system of morality was not the first design of the Scriptures, the statement of morals contained in them greatly adds to their beauty and usefulness. The knowledge of morality which descended from our first parents to their posterity had, in the days of Noah, lost its influence. " The wickedness of man was great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The precepts inculcated by Noah on his posterity, were ineffectual to produce any great good. They had before them indeed an instance of the righteous displeasure of God against sin, in the destruction of the old world ; yet this was not enough to overcome their moral depravity. As

they spread upon the face of the earth, and grew into nations, they became corrupt; the principle of self love influenced their conduct; passion and pride prevailed; they were addicted to the most base and criminal practices; and their history plainly shows, that, without a revelation from God, there would have been no true morality found amongst men.

In the patriarchal age, men had some knowledge of the will of God; that he disapproved of every thing immoral; and that nothing but good proceeded from him. The doctrine of rewards and punishments was in some measure understood by them; they knew that it was their duty to fear God, and the rites of religion were established amongst them.

The Mosaic dispensation was founded upon principles of morality, and was for substance the same as the patriarchal, with the addition of a special covenant made by God with one people. This revelation introduced more distinct ideas of him by the moral law; marked out the line from which the Messiah was to descend; and kept up an expectation of his appearance. The morality contained in the ten commandments given from Mount Sinai, and also in the writings of Moses, is very evident; and though at this distance of time we cannot tell precisely the use of all the institutions and rites appended to that dispensation, they were doubtless designed for the good of that people, intimating to them the pollution of sin, the necessity of a greater sacrifice for it than any which they could offer, as well as of more effectual purifications than any that were provided by the ceremonial law. Thus they were instructed to look forward to the coming of the promised seed, who was to atone for sin, and to purify the consciences of men, by his own blood. Thus do the Old Testament Scriptures enjoin a pure morality, and therefore in this particular carry in themselves a powerful argument for their inspiration.

The same holy doctrines and precepts for substance are delivered to us in the New Testament, freed from that burden of ceremonies which under the Jewish dispensation was necessary; they are also stated and enjoined with ad-

ditional clearness and force, and are suited to all the nations of the earth, and to every period of time. This will evidently appear by referring to some branches of their morality; the character of him by whom it was taught; and the motives by which it is urged upon us.

The gospel requires us to love God, and our neighbour. Both these commands Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfil; he requires that we should love God with all the heart, and soul, and strength; and then that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. These two commandments are inseparably connected. Whoever regards his Creator with supreme affection, will esteem man as the noblest and best resemblance of him. The evidence of our love to God, is chiefly to be gathered from our love to mankind.

The gospel commands us to love even our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us. These principles are enforced upon our attention with inimitable simplicity and beauty in the parable of the good Samaritan, and in many other sayings and parables of Christ.

The morality of the gospel extends to every condition, and is adapted to every character; the magistrate is instructed by it how to rule, and the subject how to obey. The husband is taught to love his wife, and the wife to see that she reverence her husband. There is scarcely any particular in which the excellency of moral precepts, as enjoined in the gospel, is more evident, than in the happy alteration they have effected in many places in the condition of females. In heathen lands, where these precepts are not known, women are degraded as though they were not worthy to be considered as suitable and proper companions for men. This cannot but be highly displeasing to our Maker. If God gives in general more strength of body, and a greater degree of intellect, to men than to women, yet the natural excellences of the latter, and their utility in almost every situation of life, abundantly make up for these deficiencies. "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."

The gospel teaches parents to bring up their children in

the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; and children are taught by it to love and to obey their parents. Masters are directed to give unto their servants, that which is just and equal, and servants to obey their masters, not as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

The morality of the gospel goes still further ; it takes cognizance of our thoughts. This is peculiar to the law of heaven. The laws of men extend only to overt acts. We are not amenable to human tribunals for the thoughts of our hearts, but God requires not only that our outward conduct be unblamable, but also that our minds should be free from those thoughts which generate evil. " He that is angry with his brother without a cause, is a murderer ; and whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

The gospel is distinguished from the laws of men, by forbidding ambition, and a thirst for the honour which cometh from men, and in requiring of us the contrary dispositions. To please God is the great object it sets before us ; and it teaches us to retire from publicity, as much as is compatible with that object. " Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." Meekness, humility, freedom from envy, forgiveness of injuries, and good will to mankind, are therein inculcated. These are what Jesus Christ means by those precepts, which, if taken literally, could not be complied with to any considerable extent, but which, when thus interpreted, may be practised by all men. " If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also ; if any man sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also ; whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." The character of the Saviour is also a part of the morality of the New Testament. One strong observation upon which is, that neither as represented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, was he ever charged with any personal vice. This unblamableness is more peculiar than we are apt to imagine. Some stain pollutes the injunctions,

or the morality, of every other teacher and lawgiver. Zeno the Stoic, and Diogenes the Cynic, both fell into the foulest impurities, of which Socrates himself was more than suspected. Solon forbid unnatural crimes to slaves, as though he thought them allowable in free men. Lycurgus treated theft as a part of education. Plato recommended a community of women, notwithstanding its being so prejudicial to the peace and happiness of mankind. Aristotle maintained the general right of making war upon barbarians, as if he thought their lives and liberties were not as dear to them as they are to others. The elder Cato was remarkable for his ill usage to his slaves ; and the younger gave up the person of his wife. One loose principle is found in all the Pagan moralists, and is distinctly perceived in the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus ; that is, their allowing and recommending to their disciples a compliance with the religion and the religious rites of every country into which they came. How different is this from the holy and inflexible morality of the gospel, and from the commands of Jesus Christ ! In speaking of the founders of new institutions, we must not forget Mahomet. His licentious transgressions even of his own licentious rules ; his abuse of the character he had acquired, for the purposes of personal and privileged indulgence ; his avowed claim of special permission from heaven of unlimited sensuality ; are known to every reader, as they are confessed by every writer of the Moslem story. The mind in which a system so unholy and impure can make any progress, must be very far from the morality of the gospel. (See Paley's Evidences, Vol. 2, pp. 71, 72.) Infidels, with all their enmity to Christianity, have confessed the purity of Christ's character, and the salutary effects of his gospel, in language which makes it astonishing how they could reject him or his doctrine. " In Christ we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit ; of a becoming modesty and sobriety ; just, honest, upright, and sincere ; and above all, of a most gracious temper and behaviour ; one who did no wrong, no injury to any man ; in whose mouth there was no guile ; who went about doing good, not only by his ministry, but

also curing all manner of diseases among the people. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature in its native simplicity; and it showed at once what excellent creatures men would be when under the influence of the gospel." (Chubb).

"I will confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast, or of an ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! what sublimity in his maxims! what profound wisdom in his discourses! what presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where is the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary good man, with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest reward of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ; the resemblance was so striking, that all the Christian fathers perceived it." (Rousseau, in Horne's *Intro.* Vol. I. p. 456.)

These concessions almost make us forget that they come from professed infidels, and show how much men may perceive of the excellency of Christ's character, and of the purity of his doctrine, even while they have no inclination to bow themselves to his authority. Great abilities are nothing, learning is nothing, the power of flowing and eloquent language is nothing, nor any degree of knowledge to which the human mind can attain, unless the Holy Spirit enlighten the understanding to perceive the nature, and to feel the force of divine truth. What need therefore have we to pray for this Holy Spirit, and what encouragement have we to do so, in the assurance that God will bestow it upon all them that ask him!

The gospel supplies the strongest motives to obey its precepts;—our being thereby made like unto God, or perfect even as he is perfect; our being his children, and sharing his paternal affection and care, and the love of Christ towards us, who died to redeem us from everlasting perdition; with his ability and willingness to save all that trust in him.

The gospel proclaims its choicest blessings, and promises its richest, rewards to the poor in spirit, and them that mourn; to the meek, and them that hunger and thirst after righteousness; to the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and them that are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. On the other hand it addresses our fears, and awakens our attention, by its threatenings, assuring us that they who do not obey it will be punished with eternal destruction, and that Jesus Christ will condemn them to everlasting fire, with the devil and his angels. Thus, by hope and by fear; by the prospect, and by the promise, of eternal happiness; and by the dread and the threatening of that misery, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; we are invited and intreated to obey the precepts contained in the gospel. The motives and inducements are as superior to all others, as the object they have in view are more important; more to be desired, and more to be feared.

The New Testament contains some of the most beautiful and expressive summaries of morality that were ever put into words, and thereby shows its divine original. “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

We conclude therefore that Jesus Christ has proved himself to be a divine teacher, and his gospel to be worthy of universal acceptance, by his own godlike character, the purity of his instructions, and the motives by which he enforced those instructions. Let every reader then constantly

and with diligent attention study the sacred Scriptures ; let him ask his conscience whether they do not carry in them sufficient proof of their heavenly origin ; let him study their adaptation to his circumstances, as a sinner before God : and, if the Divine Spirit assist him, he will then fully believe their divine inspiration ; feeling an evidence in himself that they are of God, and that their truth is established as firmly as his eternal throne.

SECTION IV.

THE CHARACTER OF THE WRITERS.

The writers of the New Testament were contemporary with Christ, and lived at the very period in which the things they relate took place. Had they lived only a few years afterwards, their testimony might not have been so credible as it now is ; they not only lived at the very time, but most of them for many years before and after it.

They evidently thought what they wrote to be of peculiar importance. We may reject what historians in general write, without dangerous consequences ; but the gospel claims our belief, as inseparably connected with our present and eternal happiness. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book ; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name. He that believeth not shall be damned." This language exhibits the views they had of what they wrote. No other writers ever made such express and positive claims to the credit of their readers, or denounced such awful threatenings as they did against those who should reject or disbelieve what they testified.

This can be accounted for only on the principle of their knowing themselves to be inspired by the Spirit of God,

to write an account of the birth, life, miracles, sufferings, death, and resurrection of their Lord and Master. It was necessary that a faithful history of these events should be left on record for the benefit of the world. These writers had opportunities of doing this, without inspiration, far beyond any other men ; yet, from the important nature of the subject, it was not proper that they should be left to their own memories, but it was necessary that God should assist them by his Spirit, and also afford them full conviction of that assistance.

The gospel plan of salvation originating as it did in the love and mercy of God, coming to us through the vicarious sacrifice of his Son, and being written for our instruction by the infallible dictation of the Holy Spirit, it is highly offensive to him to reject that Gospel. “ He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” He treats his word as unworthy of credit, and acts as though its chief and principal truth was a falsehood. It is in vain for such a man to pretend that he believes the testimony of God in other things, if he reject this grand and fundamental doctrine. All other doctrines have an inseparable connection with this. It is the sun in the system ; the centre of attraction, diffusing light, warmth, and vigour through the whole. Whatever else he may believe, it can do him no good : his opinions in many other things may be agreeable to the word of God, but they are not founded upon it. Many men assent to scriptural truths merely because they think them otherwise proved, and that there is nothing to be lost by assenting to them ; but if their reason must be humbled, or their pride brought down by this belief, they adhere to carnal reason, and treat the word of God as a falsehood. Such men are exposed to the displeasure of God ; his wrath abideth on them ; and, unless they become humble and holy, it will eternally confound and destroy them.

It is also worthy of observation, that the disciples of our Lord not only witnessed his public conduct, but they had also an opportunity of observing him in a manner which none but his peculiar friends could do. Peter, James, and

John, witnessed his transfiguration upon the holy mount, when "there came a voice from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." They were also with him in the garden, when he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to his heavenly Father. If, as has been observed, the late Mr. Boswell is considered to have been competent to write Dr. Johnson's life, because he was present at many of his conversations, and had for many years the most intimate acquaintance with him; or if the late Andrew Fuller is reckoned to have been a proper person to write the life of the excellent Samuel Pearce, because he intimately knew him, and was favoured with most of his papers; surely we cannot doubt the competency of the evangelical historians to write an account of the life and death of their Lord and Master, with whom they had lived on terms of the greatest intimacy and friendship.

"What instance can be given of the life of any one man being written by four persons, all of whom had equal opportunities to write with such exactness as these men had to write the life of Christ?" Infidelity is therefore highly unreasonable, especially in those who admit the truth of what is not so well authenticated as the truth of what they deny. Had the disciples not been inspired, there is no good ground on which their testimony can be rejected; and if what they state is not to be relied upon, we ask, What may be relied upon? all history must be rejected, and no records can be handed down to posterity. To deny that these writers were inspired, is to deny their truth and their honesty; for they tell us that the Holy Spirit descended upon them, and that they were filled with his influence.

Peter puts the commandment of the Apostles, of whom he was one, on a level with what was spoken before by the holy prophets. He also makes the writings of Paul equal to the other Scriptures, which they that were unlearned and unstable wrested to their own destruction.

The sacred writers were either inspired, or they were mistaken. But to admit that they were mistaken in one thing, makes it probable that they were mistaken in another, and

then there would be no certainty about any thing they have written ; for in this case, who could tell what is true, and what is not ? To suppose that what is agreeable to reason may be received, and the rest be rejected, is not at all to the purpose ; for what one man accounts agreeable to reason, another may not. This therefore would be only saying that every man may receive as much of the Scriptures as he pleases, and no more ; the foundation of which lies in the objection that carnal men have to the requisitions of the gospel. To renounce our own righteousness, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow the Son of God, through evil report and good report, are things to which carnal men will not submit. They love sin, and will indulge in it. They cannot think that their conduct is so evil as to deserve the displeasure of God, therefore the truths of the gospel must be rejected, and their sins indulged ; reason must be exalted to the seat of judgment, and the declarations of God's word must be set at nought.

All the evangelists do not place the facts mentioned in the Gospels in the same order and connection with each other, and therefore to superficial readers there may appear in them some contradictory statements : yet, upon a nice observation of the whole history, these objections vanish ; and even the apparent contradictions serve the more powerfully to confirm their testimony. “ A good deal of the discrepancy observed in the Gospels arises from omissions ; from a fact or passage of Christ's life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another. Now omission is at all times a very uncertain ground of objection. We perceive it not only in the comparison of different writers, but even in the same writer when compared with himself. There are a great many particulars, and some of them of importance, mentioned by Josephus in his *Antiquities*, which might have been put down by him in their place in the *Jewish Wars*. Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio Cassius, have all three of them written of the reign of Tiberius. Each has mentioned many things omitted by the rest, yet no objection is from thence taken against the credit of their respective

histories. We have in our own times, if there were not something indecorous in the comparison, the life of an eminent person by three of his friends, in which there is a great variety in the incidents selected by them ; some apparent, and some real contradictions ; yet without any impeachment of the substantial truth of their accounts, of the authenticity of the books, of the competent information, or of the general fidelity of the writers." (Paley.) Had all the evangelists stated facts exactly alike, they might have been suspected of consulting with each other for the purpose of imposing on their readers ; but, like honest and faithful men, they were concerned about nothing but truth.

There is amongst them that difference naturally to be expected in the relations of different observers of the same events. It is well known that no two men, who have not previously concerted together for the purpose, will relate any one affair they have witnessed, exactly in the same manner, especially if it be of any length, and include many particulars. Let any four men witness any thing criminal in a fifth, and let him be brought to justice, and the four appear on his trial as evidences against him ; their relations of the facts of the case may vary from each other, but it may, notwithstanding this, be evident to the jury that the party against whom they testify is guilty. An artful and wrangling counsellor, well paid for his pleadings on behalf of the criminal, might endeavour to find a defect in the evidence, just as infidels do in the evidence of the Evangelists ; yet we have no doubt that an honest jury would find the prisoner guilty. Even the counsellor himself must perceive the justness of the sentence, and in his own conscience approve of the verdict. This kind of variation is found among the sacred historians. They all agree that Jesus Christ was upon the earth ; that he was a divine teacher ; that he wrought miracles ; that he died, and rose again ; that he ascended into heaven ; that he was the Son of God, and the Saviour of man. This is all that could be wished ; the main facts being true, we cannot doubt the truth of all they have stated. Instead of inspiration interposing to prevent this variety in their testimony, it may rather be considered as a proof of their fidelity.

If the facts stated by the Evangelists did not take place, they might at the first have easily and successfully been contradicted, and their testimony concerning them rendered worse than useless. Such a person as Jesus Christ could not remain unobserved by those who were far from becoming his followers. The fame of his miracles would sound through the whole country where he lived, and his exemplary conduct would be noticed by great numbers of persons. The exact statements that the evangelists make of persons, places, and times, would have exposed them to detection if those statements had been incorrect.

Let the single instance of the resurrection of Christ be considered, and it must appear at once that, had he not risen from the dead, the Jewish rulers would have taken methods to prove it. Would they not have produced his dead body, in order to confute what, if generally believed, must give stability to that cause which they earnestly wished to suppress? Yet no such contradictory evidence was given; but even some of the great men of the Jewish nation believed on him, and others who did not become his followers found themselves obliged to admit what indeed it was impossible for them effectually to deny.

“The admission of what the disciples have stated concerning the great facts on which Christianity rests is virtually admitting the whole, as it could answer no purpose to them to add an account of small and unimportant matters, not in themselves true, to others so superior to them, the truth of which was well established, for this would expose the whole of their account to suspicion. And for a company of men, the greater part of whom were Jewish peasants, to attempt to make up a history like that contained in the Gospels, in which one who appeared like themselves is the principal person, in direct opposition to the civil and ecclesiastical power of their country, and that this should pass for truth in its great and leading features, is totally incompatible with all principles of reason and experience, and could never gain credit but with men who are determined to resist all evidence, in favour of their own notions.” (See Paley’s Evidences). The very idea of attempting to do this would more become lunatics than sensible men: it outrages even

fanaticism and enthusiasm, leaving their wildest and most extravagant reveries far behind it in folly and in madness.

The writers of the New Testament have displayed marks of sound sense and of good understanding equal to men in general, and more than equal to many in their circumstances. We ask, How is it to be accounted for that they did what they did in the midst of so much and such powerful opposition? Has any thing similar to it ever occurred in any nation, or at any time, since the world began? Let any body of men make an experiment to be at all compared with it, even under the most favourable circumstances; and, if they succeed, we will then admit that we are deceived. Let infidels show, if they can, how the success of the disciples of Christ is to be accounted for on any other principle than that of his being the Messiah, appointed to lay the foundation of a new dispensation of religion, and of their being his servants in that cause. Till this is done, it is of no use for them to cavil at little matters, and to triumph as though the fabric of Christianity were overthrown, because some things are not, in their opinion, expressed just as they should be. This folly of theirs resembles that of men rejoicing at the overthrow of a strong and beautiful building, merely because a mischievous hand had succeeded in displacing a small stone in some inferior part of it.

The time to crush Christianity, if it could have been done, was at its first propagation; but, as it could not be effected then, how shall it be effected now? It is of God, and cannot be destroyed. Infidels may as well attempt to regulate the wind, to direct the clouds, or to hinder the orb of day from shedding his light and heat over the face of the earth. As the stone cut out of the mountain without hands broke in pieces, the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold, and they became like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and were carried away by the wind, whilst itself became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth; so Christianity shall overcome all its enemies, and in God's appointed time fill the whole world. Infidelity shall not then be found; "but the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the face of the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

We may add, that the writers to whom we refer were evidently at the utmost distance from any thing like deceit or guile. Had they been impostors wishing to impose a feigned character upon their countrymen, they would have studied so to compose his history, that no objection should have been made to their fidelity ; for which purpose they would have agreed together. But, as Dr. Beattie, has observed, " there are no remarks thrown in to anticipate objections, nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture, no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative." They lay the facts before him, in language plain and unadorned, and so as to carry marks of truth and sincerity in its very nature. This appears with peculiar force, and can hardly escape the notice of the dullest readers. The natural ease, the clearness, and the minute specification manifest in them, are at the greatest distance from craft and design ; they studied no arts of evasion, their statements are peculiar for nothing more than for their simplicity and honesty.

The meanness of their origin, their national prejudices, their slowness to receive their Master's instructions, their cowardice in deserting him when seized by his enemies, and their incredulity concerning his resurrection, together with the defects of their own tempers, would all have been hidden from their readers, had they not been men of truth and integrity. This also is an argument for their inspiration : their writings being so contrary in this respect to those of other men, makes it probable that they were not left to themselves in their composition. Humanly speaking, their very fidelity would have frustrated their designs ; but they wrote under the influence of the Spirit of God, and therefore this peculiarity of manner tended more than any other could have done to promote their designs. The advantage of the gospel history has appeared in all ages of the Christian church, being adapted to prove the obedience of faith, and yet to support the smallest portion of it ; to afford to the most simple enquirer after truth suitable direction, and to humble the pride of human reason.

The greatest attainments in science, or in the knowledge of polite literature, afford no advantage in reading the sacred pages; whilst humility, and true contrition of spirit, are indispensably necessary to understand them, and to perceive their beauty. Plain and unlettered men may comprehend the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances of religion, and feel as much of their importance as the most learned. To the poor the gospel is preached, and they receive it; whilst many of the rich, the learned, and the worldly wise, reject the counsel of God against themselves, and perish in their sins.

The first preachers of the gospel could not be influenced by hopes of worldly grandeur, distinction, or pre-eminence among men. Christ told them what they must expect, if they were devoted to his cause; nevertheless they were not moved: their constancy in his service was apparent to all men. Whatever they might hope for at the commencement of their discipleship, or a considerable time after that period when they said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel,"—when the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, all thoughts of worldly distinction vanished; they saw they must be conformed to him whom they followed, who, though he was the Lord of life and glory, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Worldly greatness and splendour, the honour that cometh from man, and the desire to be renowned in future ages, have stimulated the general, and the philosopher; but the disciples of Christ could hope for nothing but shame and reproach, persecution and death. Still, for the love they bore to him, they cheerfully spent, and at last laid down, their lives in his cause. Was it ever known that a company of men acted thus, in opposition to the general ideas and feelings of mankind? Did ever any other men thus hazard property, reputation, and even life itself, for a vain and delusive object; for what they well knew to be all a cheat?

We challenge the craft, the subtlety, the audacity, the wickedness of infidelity to account for the conduct of the disciples of Christ, on any other principles than that they

knew their Master was divine; that they were appointed by him to propagate the glad tidings of redemption through his blood; and that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write a history of him for the use of future ages. Admit these things, and all is plain; we see reason to justify their conduct; we discover a cause worthy of their zeal, their labour, their patience, and their self-denial. But without this admission, their conduct must for ever remain a mystery to both the friends and the enemies of religion.

We do not forget that Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples; but we deny that an argument can be drawn from this circumstance against either him or his cause; and we contend that it numbers amongst the very things which prove him to be the Messiah, and his cause to be divine.

After Judas had perpetrated this deed, he was stung with remorse, and put an end to his mortal existence. Had he known that Christ was an impostor, there could be no occasion for this; he would rather have rejoiced to think that he had been the means of freeing the world from one whose claims were ambitious and groundless. He had been with Christ, was intimate with him, had full opportunity of observing his miracles, and of hearing his sermons; and even his private conduct was exposed in a great degree to his inspection. He was intrusted with the common purse, and therefore must understand much of the affairs of his master and fellow apostles; yet after he had betrayed him, he threw down the reward of iniquity, and declared that he had betrayed innocent blood.

Consider this, my soul, and let it endear to thee the gospel of the Saviour. Whilst thou mournest the depravity of human nature manifested by the traitor, rejoice in Him who is both able and willing to save the vilest of sinners. To rejoice on any other account is, comparatively speaking, momentary; but to rejoice in Christ, as the Saviour of our souls, endures through life, lives in death, and will continue to all eternity.

SECTION V.

THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL IN THE EARLY AGES
OF CHRISTIANITY.

In concluding this subject, we shall notice the prevalence of Christianity in its early ages as a proof of its divine authority.

The Old Testament, as we have already noticed, predicted that in the reign of the Messiah the Gentiles should be partakers of its inestimable blessings; that there should be one Lord, and his name one, throughout the earth; that from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, incense and a pure offering should be offered to him; that the mountain of the Lord's house should be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations should flow unto it; and it also contained many other prophetic declarations concerning the calling of the Gentiles; from which it is evident, that the message of mercy brought by Jesus Christ was not exclusively intended for the Jews. He himself, in the course of his ministry, frequently intimated the same thing: "Other sheep," said he, "I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." He taught the same thing by comparing his gospel to a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof; and also to leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. The principal intention of these parables was to show, that from small beginnings the gospel should obtain a wide circulation; that it should spread over the face of the earth; and that all nations should participate of its blessings.

Whoever reads the book of the Acts, and the Apostolic

Epistles, will perceive that what was thus foretold began at an early period of the gospel dispensation to be accomplished. The first meeting of the disciples, after the death of Christ, consisted only of one hundred and twenty; and if these were not all who had at that time imbibed the principles of Christianity, they were all that had courage sufficient to meet together.

This meeting took place shortly after the ascension of our Lord: but we are informed that under Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were added to the church; and that soon after the number of the disciples was about five thousand, and many of the chief rulers believed on him, but because of the Pharisees did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; and that the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. Let infidelity account for this if it can; and if not, let it blush with shame.

A persecution being raised against the Christians at Jerusalem, the disciples left that city; but wherever they came, they carried their religion with them: they went every where preaching the word, which greatly increased their number, and even persecution was overruled for the spread of the cause which it sought to destroy.

When the gospel was preached to the idolatrous Gentiles, many of them received it, being thereby convinced of the vanity of idolatry: churches were also planted among them, and we may readily suppose, that much more than what we read of was, through the divine blessing, effected by the first ministers of the word.

Many persons might be greatly benefited by their ministry, who had not sufficient courage to come forward and join themselves to the Christian church.

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul refers to the success of his ministry in the following words;—"To make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have

fully preached the gospel of Christ." "This not only gives us an idea of the success of the gospel at that early period; but also shows us how trivial are the labours, and how limited the success, of most ministers of the present day, compared with those of this great Apostle, whose ministry was attended with the power of the Holy Ghost in so remarkable a degree, and whose unwearied labours would admit of no bounds, but those of the human species, or of his own life." It may also suggest to the ministers of Christ how necessary it is to be diligent in their work, and to pray for the influence of the Spirit of God to attend their labours.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, the same writer thus admonishes the converts; "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." If this expression be hyperbolical, which must be allowed, yet it strongly implies the extensive spread of that which at its first commencement was very small.

James addressed his epistle to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Peter addressed his to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; which proves that there were Christians living in all those places in numbers sufficient to obtain the notice of an apostle, who wrote to them a first and a second epistle. Will infidels maintain that all this was effected by a ministry, which had no foundation but in the reveries of enthusiastic men? or will they deny the authenticity of the document in which it is asserted? In either case a hardihood is evinced, which discovers to what an awful state of impenitence and rebellion they must have arrived.

Amongst the heathen writers who mention the spread of the gospel were Tacitus and Pliny, the latter of whom was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two considerable northern districts of Asia Minor. He applied by letter to the Emperor at Rome, to know what he would advise him to do respecting Christians, when brought before him, who were persecuted by their idolatrous neighbours for their adherence to Christ and to his gospel.

"Justin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny,

and one hundred and six years after the ascension of Christ, has these remarkable words ; “ There is not a nation of either Greek, Barbarian, or any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe by the name of the crucified Jesus.” Tertullian, who comes fifty years after Justin, appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in these words ; “ We are but as yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns, and boroughs ; the camp, the senate, and the forum. They (the heathen adversaries of Christianity) lament that every sex, age, and condition of persons, are converted to that name.”

Other writers mention the same thing in terms which fully prove how far the Christian religion had prevailed at this period ; and it is well known that, under Constantine, the Roman empire became Christian, and that Christianity was the established religion. This circumstance, however favourable it might appear at the time, cannot be sufficiently lamented. Before it took place, Christians had borne persecution with patience ; the more they were opposed, the more they increased ; the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church : but now, the glory departed. Endowed by a powerful monarchy, the professed church became tyrannical, and in its turn persecuted those who differed from it. Even the established clergy, being lured by the possession or the expectation of wealth and honour, blew the martial trumpet, and gave the signal for battle. “ Jesus Christ says, “ My kingdom is not of this world ; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.” But now, they gave it a worldly appearance, and the sword was put into the hands of Christians. What a falling off from the courage, the intrepidity, and the persevering diligence in holiness, of the first Christians ! How little did these furious bigots understand and feel of the peace of God, which keepeth the heart and mind of its possessors ! how little did they imitate the Saviour, or exemplify the precepts of his holy word ! And many since their days have imitated their ungodly conduct, under the mask of Christianity.

This, however, bad as it was, did not put a stop to the progress of the gospel; the cause of God went forward, although church tyrants raged, and oppressed and persecuted the saints. The doctrines and ordinances of Christ were exchanged by them for something more agreeable to their carnal taste; yet the true church still existed. God was its defence: he was in the midst of it, making the malice of its enemies, the oppression of his people, with all the gloomy and dismal events which he suffered to take place, subservient to his own purposes.

There is nothing in the history of mankind to be compared with the success of the gospel. Strange events have taken place, and the public credit has for a time been imposed upon by impostors, but a few years have discovered the imposition; while the gospel has stood the test of ages, the severest attacks of criticism, the assaults of infidelity, impudent and daring as they have been, and is still a source of peace and comfort to all who truly embrace it.

Should it be said that Mahometanism has succeeded in countries where it has been propagated, and that in this respect it may bear a comparison with Christianity; it ought to be remembered, that the success of the one is to be accounted for on principles directly opposite to those of the other. Mahomet allured his followers by sinful indulgences; Jesus Christ forbade those indulgences, on pain of the displeasure of Almighty God. Let the Koran be compared with the New Testament: the former gratifies a vicious taste; the latter condemns it: the former is adapted to the carnal passions, and the sensual inclinations of men, admitting, or conniving at their gratification; the latter, as we have seen, contains the purest precepts, and requires prompt obedience to a holy God.

Mahomet obtained his victories by policy, craft, and bloodshed; but Jesus Christ taught a pure and undefiled religion; the disciples of the one were induced to obey the commands of their leader by the promise and the prospect of carnal indulgence; but those of the other were required to bear difficulties, and trials, with patient resignation. They must be strangers indeed to human nature, who do

not see a vast difference between these two systems, and who are not able to distinguish between their respective causes of success. Mahometanism could not have lived, much less have thrived, under circumstances in which Christianity grew and prospered: an arm of flesh supported the one; the other was fostered by the power of God. What could Mahometanism have done without arms, without power, without the influence of worldly greatness and ambition? It must at the very outset, have drooped, and withered, and died. Tyranny and the point of the sword obtained its success, otherwise it would long since have been buried in oblivion; but not so Christianity: its conquests have been of a nature transcendently glorious; it has shed its genial rays, and healing beams, over the moral maladies of mankind, and its efficacy has been felt by some of the most untractable and outrageous of our species. Mahometanism never made a saint of a sinner; it never converted men to God; it never made them possessors of the faith which works by love, and purifies the heart; but Christianity has done this in thousands, and in tens of thousands of instances.

But it may be asked, Are there not some passages of the Scriptures, which the writers acknowledge not to be the language of inspiration? For instance, when Paul says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." And again; "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." And again; "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." (1 Cor. vii. 6. 10. 12. 25.)

We admit that some learned men have thought that these passages distinguish what the Apostle spake by immediate revelation from what he delivered as mere advice or opinion, from which they have drawn an argument in favour of the inspiration of what he does not so distinguish. Now had we no other answer to this enquiry, infidelity could gain no advantage, unless it can be maintained that because there are a few passages in Paul's writings, which are not inspired, therefore none of them are so, nor yet the

writings of the other Apostles, than which nothing can be more inconclusive, or absurd.

But we apprehend that this is not the proper view of the subject, and therefore shall proceed to state what is, by us, considered as the meaning of these passages. This shall be done in the words of that eminent critic on the sacred writings, Dr. M'Knight.

‘Yet not I, but the Lord.’ The Lord Jesus during his ministry on earth delivered many precepts of his law in the hearing of his disciples. And those which he did not deliver in person, he promised to reveal by the Spirit after his departure. Therefore there is a just foundation for distinguishing the commandments, which the Lord delivered in person, from the commandments which he revealed to the apostles by the Spirit, and which they made known to the world by their sermons and writings. It may be inferred likewise from the language of Peter and Jude, (2 Pet. iii. 2. Jude ver. 17.) where the commandments of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour are mentioned, not as inferior in authority to the commandments of the Lord, (for they were all as really his commandments as those which he delivered in person,) but as different in the manner of their communication. This authority of the commandments of the Apostles will be acknowledged, if we consider that, agreeably to Christ’s promise, (John iv. 16.) the Holy Spirit dwelt with the Apostles for ever, (xvi. 13.) to lead them into all the truth; that is, to give them the perfect knowledge of all the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. This abiding inspiration Paul enjoyed equally with the rest of the Apostles, since, as he tells us repeatedly, ‘he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles.’ So that he could say with truth concerning himself, as well as concerning them, “We have the mind of Christ:” and again; ‘He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit,’ (1 Thess. iv. 8.) Since therefore the Apostle Paul enjoyed the abiding inspiration of the Spirit, it is evident that in answering the questions proposed to him by the Corinthians, when he distinguished the commandments of the Lord from his own commandments, his

intention was not, as many have imagined, to tell us in what things he was inspired, and in what not, but to show us what commandments the Lord delivered personally in his lifetime, and what the Lord inspired the Apostles to deliver after his departure. This Paul could do with certainty, because, although he was not of the number of those who accompanied our Lord during his ministry, all the particulars of his life and doctrine were made known to him by revelation, as may be gathered from 1 Cor. xi. 23. xv. 3. 1 Tim. v. 18, and from the many allusions to the works and actions of Christ found in the Epistles, which Paul wrote before any of the Gospels were published; and from his mentioning one of Christ's sayings not recorded by any of the Evangelists. (Acts xx. 35.) Farther; that the Apostle's intention in distinguishing the Lord's commandments from what he calls his own commandments was not to show us what things he spake by inspiration and what not, I think evident from his adding certain circumstances, which prove that in delivering his own commandments, he was evidently inspired. Thus when he says, ver. 25. 'Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful;' by affirming that he had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, he certainly meant to tell us that in giving his judgment concerning virgins, he was inspired. So also when he gave his judgment that a widow was at liberty to marry a second time; by adding, verse 40, 'she is happier if she so abide according to my judgement, and I am certain that I have the Spirit of God,' he plainly asserted that he was inspired in giving that judgment or determination. Lastly; when he called on those among the Corinthians who had the gift of discerning spirits, (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) to acknowledge that the doctrines and precepts which he had delivered in that Epistle were the commandments of the Lord, he certainly in the most express manner asserted that he had delivered those doctrines and precepts by the inspiration of the Spirit. 'If any one (says he) think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the

commandments of the Lord.' Upon the whole, I appeal to every candid reader, whether the apostle could have said these things, if the judgment which he delivered on the different subjects in this chapter had been a mere human or uninspired judgment, and not a judgment dictated by the Spirit of God."

Nothing needs be added to this quotation: it sufficiently proves that the apostle never designed to intimate that any thing he wrote in his epistles was mere human opinion, but rather that all he wrote was by the influence of the Spirit of God.

From reviewing the evidences by which the truth of our holy religion, and the inspiration of the sacred writings, are established, we feel a confidence in them, not to be shaken by the sneers of infidelity, or the scorn and ridicule of scepticism. We are not only not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but we glory in it as our support in the difficulties of life, and as our consolation in the prospect of death. Rejoicing ourselves in such an inestimable treasure, we are anxious that it should be possessed by all men, and that every nation may read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

The foregoing evidences have shown that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, without specifically noticing the authenticity of their several books. That of the books of the Old Testament may for the present be left with the Jews, their well known attention to their sacred writings being such as to preclude all suspicion on this head. That of the books of the New Testament belongs particularly to Christians, and before we conclude we will briefly state a few things on this subject.

Were it impossible for us to prove the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, this could not affect the truth of their inspiration, any more than our not being able to trace the road to the mint in which the money of this realm is coined, could prove that it is not the circulating medium. If that money bear the marks of royal authority, and be of sufficient intrinsic value, we receive it without hesitation.

As but few persons, comparatively speaking, understand the exact place of the mint and all the circumstances of coining, while many enjoy the advantages of the currency, so it is with the sacred writings; but very few have the time, learning, and ability to investigate the evidences of their inspiration and authenticity, yet they may enjoy the consolation they afford. If they have felt their quickening power to bring them to repentance toward God, and to faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, this will make them happy in the present world, and give them a lively hope of a glorious immortality. Such persons may be silenced in argument on these subjects, but they cannot be argued out of their experimental acquaintance with God, and with his son Jesus Christ, which is derived from the divine blessing upon the sacred Scriptures.

The evidence for the authenticity of the books of the New Testament is such as ought not to be doubted. There are allusions to them in the ecclesiastical writers of the first four centuries, and in some of those writers there are quotations from them as being written by the persons whose names they now bear.

The writings of Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, all of the first century, contain allusions to the four Gospels, and to the Epistles of Paul. Those of the second century, as Papias, the Asiatic bishop, and Justin Martyr, Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, and Tertullian of Carthage, contain passages of the same kind. The writings of Origen, who flourished A D. 230, contain an abundance of quotations from various parts of the New Testament. Some of these writers have also given catalogues of the different books.

It should be remembered that these writers lived at different times; that they were inhabitants of countries remote from each other; and that they held different situations in the church, and in the world. Yet, diversified as they were in almost every other respect, their testimony to the authenticity and authority of the New Testament is perfectly harmonious, which can be accounted for only from the truth of that testimony.

The early enemies of Christianity, as well as its friends, allowed the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. Among the early heretics who fell away from the truths which they once espoused, into the most absurd and unscriptural errors, there were some who rejected the divine authority of those parts of the books which were opposed to their errors; but that these books themselves were the real productions of their supposed authors seems to have been a point generally admitted by these bewildered disputants.

Still more important is the testimony of the heathen enemies of Christianity. From the works of Origen we learn, that his opponent, the acute and bitter Celsus, quoted largely from the New Testament, and argued against Christianity on the allowed principle that the Gospels and the Epistles were actually written by the Apostles and their companions. The same observation applies to those still more bitter enemies of religion, Porphyry and Julian. Have infidels of the present day made any new discovery? or found arguments against the inspiration and the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, which their elder brethren did not understand? "I trow not." It may, indeed, be admitted that they have more disengenuousness and greater audacity than their predecessors; but new discoveries they cannot have made, nor can they use arguments against Christianity which have not been refuted long before they were born. When will they cease from this wicked practice?

It is a most triumphant argument in favour of the New Testament, that during the first three centuries and a half of the Christian æra, almost the whole of it was admitted to be authentic by the opposers as well as the defenders of Christianity, and that the first person of whom we read as venturing to advance a contrary sentiment was Faustus, an illiterate Manichæan, who lived at the close of the fourth century.

It is true that Eusebius excludes from the list of sacred books, thus universally received, the Epistles of James and Jude, the second and third Epistles of John, the second

Epistle of Peter, and the Apocalypse. He acknowledges that the origin of these works was doubted by some persons: a fact which plainly evinces that a real discrimination was exercised on the subject, and that the authenticity of the bulk of the New Testament rested on clear and incontrovertible evidence. At the same time it ought to be observed, that the doubts entertained by some persons in the days of Eusebius, respecting the writings which he thus excepts, were not of long continuance: the books were soon afterwards received by the general consent of Christians into the canon of Scripture. Modern investigation, (conducted principally by the indefatigable Lardner,) and still more, the irresistible excellencies of the works themselves, have confirmed the propriety of this decision. (See Essays by J. J. Gurney).

The Old and New Testaments then are both inspired and authentic. We may place the utmost confidence in their contents. The man who feels their influence on his heart, and who lives agreeably to their precepts, may cast all his care upon God. He will never leave him nor forsake him; so that he may say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me."

Let every reader of the sacred writings impartially examine himself respecting his sincere and cordial belief of them. Let him most seriously ask his own conscience, whether the testimony that God hath given of his Son, has produced its proper effects upon him; whether the word of truth dwells in him richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; and whether he can say, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If the good seed be sown in the heart, it will bring forth fruit. That belief in the Scriptures which is connected with everlasting life will sanctify the soul, regulate the affections, and influence its possessor to devote himself to the service of God; it will enable him boldly to confess the name of Christ before his enemies, and teach him to value the Saviour above all other objects.

To have the Scriptures in our hands and not to believe in them is awful indeed ; it will increase our condemnation. Let us, therefore, beg of God to enable us rightly to believe the doctrines they teach, and to perform the duties they enjoin, that we may show our faith by our works. Yet, after all our works, let us remember that we are unprofitable servants, and must solely rely upon the mercy and grace of God, through Jesus Christ, for the pardon of our sins, and for eternal felicity.

CHAP. III.

ON THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

The volume of inspiration is designed to bring us to the knowledge of God. His natural and moral perfections are therein described. It informs us of every thing, both as to his nature and his works, that it can be profitable for us to know in this state of existence.

The nature of God is infinitely above the reach of created intelligence. The distance between the mightiest angels that surround his throne, and the meanest insect that flies in the air, or that crawls on the earth, is not so great as that between him and them. No comparison can be instituted betwixt what is created and what is self-existent ; it must, therefore, be utterly impossible for us to know any thing of God beyond what he has revealed of himself. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God ; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law." Man ought not to intrude into those matters which it has pleased God to conceal from him : the silence of Scripture may, in many instances, be as instructive as its language.

Nor should we try to represent, or to describe, the Maker of the universe by any thing which we have seen, heard, or

known. In what the sacred writers say of him, there is a depth which we cannot fathom, and a height to which we cannot soar ; and, therefore, when we speak of him, it is best to use their language, lest we darken counsel by words without knowledge. " He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen or can see." Nevertheless his condescension towards sinners of the human race lays a foundation for our encouragement to hope in his mercy, and for the acquisition of that knowledge of his character which is connected with happiness. If our minds are depressed at the idea of his greatness, they may revive at the recollection of his goodness. If the contemplation of his glory overwhelm us, his tender pity and gracious compassion may cheer our drooping minds. " Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Let no trembling sinner despair ; he who wounds will heal, and he who kills will make alive.

" For the soul to be without knowledge is not good ;" but the knowledge of God is more valuable than any other. " Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence ; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it."—" Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth ; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

This knowledge is greatly endeared by the medium through which it is obtained. When the father of mankind was first created, he had all that knowledge of God which was necessary for communion with him ; and it was part of the image in which he was created, and must have greatly conduced to his primeval felicity. This divine knowledge was

lost at the fall, and ignorance and blindness of heart succeeded. Adam and his posterity having thus lost the knowledge of God, Jesus Christ graciously undertook their cause, and became their redeemer. Through him we are recovered from the ignorance induced by sin, and are brought to know God, not only as our Creator, but as our covenant God and Father.

The eternal Spirit, by his sovereign influence upon the mind, and the instrumentality of the Holy Scriptures, removes this ignorance, restores man to the image of God, and reinstates him in his favour. So that "as by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." The gospel in which this grace is declared is by the divine command published to guilty men; and, being accompanied with power from on high, it becomes effectual to their conversion. God, who in the creation of the world said, "Let there be light, and there was light," shines into their heart, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Where nothing but error and sin, rebellion and enmity against God prevailed, there the light of divine truth evidences itself by its glorious effects. The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth; the Lord is their light and their salvation; they know him as the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal.

This knowledge is very different from those vague notions that are entertained by many, and which are mistaken by them for scriptural views of God's character, but which have no sanctifying effect upon the mind.

To form proper ideas of God, we must consider him,

1. As self-existent. He is "the *eternal God*;" "the everlasting God;" "the living God;" and "the everlasting King." Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth or the world, even from everlasting to everlasting he is God.

The words *everlasting*, and *for ever and ever*, are used in the Scriptures in reference to some things which are but

of limited duration ; the everlasting covenant of circumcision, and the everlasting possession of Canaan, which are now both at an end. The rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses are said to be ordinances and statutes for ever, and yet they were designed to continue only for a time. The happiness of the saints in heaven is said to be eternal, and the duration of the misery of the wicked is described by the *same word*. "These shall go to eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." (Dr. G. Campbell's Translation of Matth. xxv. 46.) But both these have a beginning, though they are said to be eternal; the meaning therefore, can only be, perpetual duration after their commencement. They are not eternal in the same sense in which God is eternal.

2. God is omnipotent. That is, he possesses infinite power. Omnipotence is essential to his nature. The very supposition of weakness in the Deity would be absurd.

The heathens are said to have supposed their gods to be omnipotent, though without any reason; but we have sufficient reason to consider the Lord our God, who is the only true and living God, as Almighty. We read in Scripture "of his eternal power and godhead;" that "nothing is impossible to him;" that "nothing is too hard for him." This attribute may be argued from the creation. "The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." "God created all things by Jesus Christ." He not only created all things, but he upholds them by the word of his power. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing; he bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under him. He hath shut up the sea with bars and doors, and said to it, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. By the power of God the seasons of the year are continued to us; all the blessings they bring are the gifts of his bounty. In him we live, and move, and have our being. Divine omnipotence is also evidenced in the redemption of men by Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding the Saviour of sinners was not only in

the beginning with God, but was himself God ; yet, in the economy of salvation, he humbled himself, and took upon him our nature, which nature was prepared for him by the power of the eternal Father, who preserved him from the malice of men, and from the temptations of Satan, and enabled him to perform those numerous miracles by which his character and mission were attested, supporting him when he endured the death of the cross, and raising him from the dead, whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power.

3. He is omniscient. This is that perfection by which he knows all things. Not successively, or one after another, as we know the few things that fall under our observation ; but at once, independently, distinctly, and infallibly, from the beginning to the end. His knowledge must therefore be infinite. To suppose him ignorant of any thing, would be to suppose him imperfect. " His understanding is infinite." (Psalm cxlvii. 5.) " Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts xv. 18.) The thoughts, words, and actions of all men are known to him, and therefore he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

The whole history of our lives is before him ; he searches our hearts, and tries our reins. Hell itself is naked before him, and destruction has no covering ; neither is there any creature in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, that is not manifest in his sight : all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. This attribute of God is full of consolation to them that fear him. Their difficulties and sorrows, their temptations and trials, their inward and outward enemies, are all known to him. We may have earthly friends who would assist us if they knew our necessities, or who knowing our necessities, would assist us if they could ; but neither of these is the case with God ; he both can do for us, and will do for us, what shall promote our best interests, in connection with his own glory. He hath said, " Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am

ought not, therefore, to suppose that the future misery of the finally impenitent, which is asserted in his word, is incompatible with his love. It ought to satisfy our minds, that notwithstanding our offences against him, such is his love in Christ Jesus, that we cannot come short of the joys of heaven, unless through our own unbelief and impenitence.

7. God is gracious: hence we read of his grace in the salvation of sinners. There are various senses in which the term *grace*, as found in the Scriptures, may be understood; but we consider it here as free favour to the guilty and undone. By sin we are liable to God's wrath; but of his sovereign good will and pleasure, according to the exceeding riches of his grace, he looks upon us with pity and compassion; delivers us from the evil of sin, sanctifies our souls, and saves us with an everlasting salvation. Grace is opposed to works; whatever is the effect of the one, cannot be the effect of the other, neither do the scriptures countenance their union in the salvation of man. "If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." "We are saved and called, not according to our works, but according to God's purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. If it be said that Christ has paid a complete ransom for his people, and that therefore grace cannot be manifested in their salvation, we answer, this objection by observing; that the scriptures ascribe our redemption to the blood of Christ, and yet make this very circumstance illustrative of divine grace. It was grace that provided the Saviour, and that brings us into union with him; repentance, faith, and holy love in our souls, not only prove the operations of grace, but its freedom and sovereignty. We had no claim upon God that he should send his Son to obey, to suffer, and to die, in our room, and for our sake; by our offences we were exposed to the curse of his law, and must have borne that curse, had it not been for his free favour. But grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, in all that believe on the Son of God.

8. Mercy is an essential attribute of Deity. Mercy is that disposition of mind which excites us to pity and to relieve those who are in trouble ; or to pass by their crimes without punishing them. It differs from love. The object of love is the creature simply ; that of mercy is the creature as fallen into misery. The mercy of God is suited to fallen man, and is more than commensurate to relieve his necessities, and to pardon his offences. “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” “Gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.” “He delighteth in mercy.” “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” This mercy originates in his goodness. Nothing out of himself could be the cause of it ; for then there would be a cause prior to himself. Nether the misery of the creature, nor the sufferings of Christ, caused God to be merciful ; for then there must have been a time when that mercy did not exist. The obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, are the means through which mercy is exercised ; for without his mediation there was no medium through which it could have flown. In order therefore, that it might be displayed consistently with justice, he became our Redeemer. In him mercy and truth meet together ; righteousness and peace embrace each other. The mercy of God is infinite ; pardoning offences committed against an infinitely holy Being. It has bestowed an infinite favour ; “through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us.” And, like the other perfections of God, it is immutable, the same from everlasting to everlasting. Every day and every hour we need mercy, and it constantly attends us. We have deserved no favour at the hands of God, and therefore our whole lives, and all our comforts, are attributable to it. If we have a good hope of a glorious immortality, it is of mercy ; and if we have not this hope, mercy encourages us to look unto God, who pardons sin for his name’s sake.

9. Patience. The patience of God deserves particular observation, and if rightly understood, must produce a good effect upon our minds. It has been greatly exercised towards us, or we should not have been permitted so long

to repeat our offences against him. Justice might have struck us dead for our first wilful transgression of God's law ; but divine patience has spared us.

Patience is essential to the nature of God. He is the God of patience, not only because he is the author and object of it, but because he is patient and long suffering towards his creatures. Divine patience is much abused. Sinners are ready to conclude, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, that it never will be executed ; and therefore their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. They who trembled at their first acts of flagrant iniquity, have, through the patience of God, become so hardened by rebellion against him, as to sin with but little remorse. " After their hard and impenitent hearts, they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God."

The patience of God gives sinners an opportunity to repent of their sins, and his forbearance should lead them to it. The discovery of mercy in Christ Jesus to all who do repent, has a tendency to produce repentance ; but their awful depravity perverts this goodness, and turns it into an occasion of increasing rebellion. Hence many fill up the measure of their iniquity, and complete their destruction ; and that all men do not act thus, is owing not to themselves, but to the mercy and grace of God. Every sin of every individual of mankind is a trial and an abuse of God's patience ; and, when we consider the number of sinners, and the sins of each one of them we must be convinced, that had it not been for the patience of God, the human race would long since have been extirpated from the face of the earth. In this view we should not forget our own sins, but be deeply humbled on their account. We have greatly abused God's patience ; none but himself could have borne with us. Our very mercies have been perverted into causes of rebellion ; and yet instead of being monuments of his wrath, we are still surrounded with his favours. O that, overcome by his goodness, we may have our hearts broken for sin, and may cease to offend against him, lest he deal with us in his righteous indignation !

10. In this general view of God's character, we must not omit his Justice. This is thought but little of by mankind. In their view of his mercy, they pass over his justice : nevertheless at the last day, when he shall judge the world in righteousness, he will convince the whole rational creation that it is inflexible. The justice of God may be considered either absolutely in itself, or relatively in its exercise, the latter proceeding from the former. In itself, it denotes the universal rectitude of his nature, antecedently to all acts of his will respecting the government of his creatures, and prior to their existence. In the government of the world, this rectitude of his nature, is *equity* ; in the truth of his declarations, it is *veracity* ; in the fulfilment of his promises, *faithfulness*, or *fidelity* ; and, in the infliction of his threatenings, *vengeance*. The justice of God has been distinguished into remunerative and punitive. The first respects the distribution of rewards ; the rule of which is not the merits of the creature, but the gracious purpose and promise of God. The second, the infliction of punishment for sin, which, though principally reserved to be displayed in the judgement of the great day, frequently breaks forth in the present world. " The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner." The history of the world, especially of the church, affords many instances of the righteous judgement of God upon his enemies.

Divine justice is conspicuous in the salvation of sinners. We had become obnoxious to God's displeasure ; but that he might exercise his love, mercy, and grace, consistently with justice, he set forth his Son Jesus Christ as the propitiation for our sins. He died the just for the unjust. The sword of divine justice awoke against the man, that is God's Fellow, his Companion, his Equal. Now God is just, while he justifies the ungodly. His perfections harmonize with and illustrate each other in human redemption. We might proceed distinctly to speak of the immutability of God, of his goodness, his faithfulness, his sovereignty, and his wrath ; but these are included in what has been already said. Instead therefore of dwelling upon them as separate per-

fections in God, I shall conclude this chapter with remarks on,

11. The divine Holiness. By the holiness of God, we do not understand a single attribute of his nature, but that which is common to all his attributes, and which influences his whole conduct. In God there is nothing but what is holy. His power is holy power; his wisdom, holy wisdom; his love, holy love; his truth, holy truth; and so of all his perfections. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all; no mixture of any thing impure, or unworthy of him. Without holiness, the wisdom of God would have been subtlety; his patience, connivance at sin; his mercy, a partial fondness for offenders; and his punitive justice, caprice and cruelty. But his holiness preserves an equal balance among his moral attributes, so that one of them is not exercised to the injury, or at the expense of another. "He hath all virtues; or rather, he hath one virtue, which includes all others; that is, the love of order. It is certain that the felicity of God is inseparable from his holiness. He is happy, because he is holy. In the contemplation of his own excellences, he has an inexhaustible source of felicity. Were it possible for him not to be supremely holy, it would be possible for him not to be supremely happy. Yes, all glorious and supreme as God is, he would be miserable, if he were subject, like unholy spirits, to the turbulent emotions of envy or hatred, treachery or deceit. From such passions would arise odious vapours, which would gather into thick clouds, and by obscuring his glory would impair his felicity." (Saurin). God is glorious in holiness; the seraphim celebrate his praises, on the ground of his holiness. The living creatures, seen by John in his vision, rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." God is originally, eternally, and immutably holy. As his being is of himself, so is his holiness; he derived it from none, it is his own native glory, overshadowing all his perfections. "There is none holy as the Lord." The holiness of men upon the earth, of the happy spirits in heaven, and of angels, is not of themselves, but of him. Holiness is ascribed to the Father, to the Son,

and to the Spirit. Christ addresses the Father, "Holy Father." Of the Son it is said, "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true"—*The holy One, the true One*. The Spirit is called, "The Spirit of holiness." The holiness of God is discovered in all his works and ways, but particularly in his disapprobation of moral evil. The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation; our first parents who ate of the forbidden fruit; the inhabitants of the old world; the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; Pharaoh and his host; the Israelites who rebelled in the wilderness; all illustrate this truth, namely, that "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Nor is there any way to escape this death, but by faith in him, whose sacrifice on the cross declares, more than all other things, the holiness of God. Had there been any way in which God consistently with his holiness could have overlooked the transgression of his law, his only begotten Son would not have borne the curse of that law. Such then is the holiness of his nature, that when his own Son became the substitute of sinners, his righteous soul must be made an offering to expiate their guilt. Their iniquities must be caused to meet on him.

The holiness of God is assigned as a reason why we should fear him. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy." It is also made a reason why we should be holy; "Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord:" and it is declared in the sacred oracles, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

From this short view of the divine character we remark,

1. How awfully those persons are mistaken who think that God is altogether such a one as themselves; and that they shall have peace, though they walk in the imaginations of their own hearts! "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.—It shall not go well with the wicked.—The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright in heart." They are the objects of his delight; he will bless them in time, and in eternity.

2. The perfections of God, each of them singly, and all of them combined, are engaged on the behalf of his

people. He is a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in the midst of them. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. He is always at hand to render them the most speedy relief. Daniel in the lion's den, and the three Hebrew youths in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, were safe under his protection. His people in their difficulties have always found him their refuge, their strength, and their very present help in trouble.

3. True happiness is inseparably connected with holiness. Sin is productive of nothing but misery; holiness of nothing but felicity. Great as is the aggregate of human woe, it is all occasioned by sin. The sorrow of the afflicted, the groans of the diseased, the cries of the bereaved, the lamentations of the destitute, with every species of trouble among men, are the fruit of sin. This is the dreadful malady that works in our nature, that spoils our comforts, that kills our bodies, and, if we do not repent of it, will plunge our souls into hell.

4. To have the means of knowing God, and yet to neglect them, is to incur great guilt. If we have no scriptural knowledge of our Creator, he will have no mercy upon us; and, though he formed us, he will show us no favour. We should be diligent then to acquire this knowledge, that we may receive his blessing. "If thou cry after knowledge, and lift up thy voice for understanding; if thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." All that is necessary to make us wise unto salvation, is to possess as much desire after divine wisdom as men in general possess after silver.

5. One of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is, Are we holy? If we are holy, all is well; but if we are not holy, nothing can be well. However great, or exalted, or rich we may be, or however wise as to the wisdom of this world, the curse of God's broken law hangs over us, and, though suspended for a time, it will fall upon us at the last. Let us beg then of God to create in us a clean heart, and to renew within us a right spirit! Amen.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE UNITY OF GOD, AND A PLURALITY
IN THE GODHEAD.

In writing on this mysterious subject, a man is placed in a situation somewhat similar to that of Moses, when he turned aside to see the bush which burned with fire, and was not consumed; when God said unto him, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," (Exod. iii. 6.) intimating to him, that this near approach to the Deity required the utmost caution. In all his approaches to him this was to be observed; but when he trod upon ground relatively holy by his *special presence*, he must keep at a proper distance, check his curiosity, and be filled with reverence and humility. The doctrines of revelation in general are to be treated with a regard that becomes their nature and importance; but when we attempt to speak of him who is glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, the self-existent Jehovah; with what words, and with what feelings, should we do it!

Eternal God! grant to thy unworthy creature that assistance which thou seest necessary, that in what he says on this sublime theme, he may express himself in a manner worthy of thee; keep him from offending thy dread majesty, and from doing injury to others by what he writes.

On this subject we observe in general, that irrespectively of what is said concerning it in divine revelation, plurality in the Divine Being may, for any thing we know to the contrary, consist with the unity of his essence; no man has yet been able to prove that it involves a contradiction.

The *modus* in which any being subsists, according to its distinct nature and properties, is a secret even to the most

profound metaphysicians ; they cannot describe it. But if the essence of bodies and of created spirits is out of the reach of human comprehension, how can we expect that the essence of the Creator should be within its reach ? We may believe that there is a plurality in the Deity without knowing, or pretending to know, how that plurality can consist with unity. It is the simple proposition that we are called upon to believe, not the manner of it.

“ God said, Let there be light, and there was light ;” but who can tell how the light came into being, or how it spread itself over the creation of God ? “ Again ; The Word was made flesh ;” but we have no knowledge how this was done, any more than we have of the manner in which the divine and human natures were united in the Son of God. Yet we believe that the Word was with God, and the Word was God ; and, that he took upon him our nature, and died on the cross, to accomplish our redemption.

To reject what exceeds our comprehension would lead us to deny, not only nearly all other truths, but even our own existence. Man, according to the Scripture, is a compound being, made up of body, soul, and spirit ; (1 Thess. v. 23.) but we have no knowledge of the link which connects these with each other, nor how their union constitutes one man. If any person should attempt to explain *how* plurality and unity can consist with each other in the Godhead, we should not hearken to him ; he might please himself with his reveries, and imagine that he had made great discoveries, but we should pity him as one who had lost himself in an inextricable labyrinth.

Although, however, they who have endeavoured to illustrate this subject by similitudes, or likenesses to other things, have done injury to the cause they wished to serve ; although they have darkened counsel by words without knowledge, and acted contrary to the spirit of the command, “ Thou shalt not make unto thee any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath ;” that is, by which to represent the Deity, either as to his form, or the manner of his existence ; yet neither the imprudent conduct of these men, nor the sublimity and grandeur of

the subject itself, should prevent a modest and humble statement of the reasons on which our belief of a plurality in the Deity is founded.

Upon this great and mysterious subject, we should keep close to the Holy Scriptures, and be very cautious lest we say any thing contrary to them. The Scylla and the Charybdis to be avoided are—on the one hand, the dividing of the essence, or the making of three infinite Beings—and on the other hand, the confounding of the Persons, or the transmuting of the eternal distinction of the divine Persons into an economical distinction. The first of these errors is Tritheism, in opposition to (Deut. vi. 4,) and the latter, Sabellianism, in opposition to (John i. 1, 14. 2 Cor. viii. 9, &c.

Having made these general observations, I shall proceed to state the evidence for the truth of this doctrine, and leave it with the reader to consider whether it be sufficient for that purpose or not.

1. It has been believed by most of those called Christians in past ages of the church, and is believed by far the greater number of them in the present day, amongst whom are men of acknowledged understanding, learning, and piety.

It is granted that human authority is of but little avail in any point of Christian doctrine ; yet, if it could be proved that only a few men had believed this doctrine in past time, or that only a few believed it at the present period, and those of an inferior description, or that it had been received only in the dark ages of Christianity, it would be thought to make somewhat against it.

Before any man rejects as erroneous that which has been received as true by many wise and judicious persons in all ages of the Christian church, he ought to pause, and consider well whether he be more capable of comprehending the meaning of revelation than those are, who in most respects must be allowed to be his superiors ; whether any peculiar light has been given to *him* to make his thoughts, reasonings, and conclusions, more just than those of others. A man may suppose that it indicates soundness of judgment, and originality of mind, to think differently from other

men, how great and excellent soever they may be ; he may compliment himself, and, indeed, be complimented by others, as one who has risen above the superstitions of the vulgar, and the prejudices of the learned ; but the whole may be a mistake. The grand features of his mind may be a fearless boldness, and a desire to be thought singular. If we are disposed to think ourselves wiser than our fathers, or to have more knowledge than most of those who have gone before us, or those who live in our own day, we should be cautious, lest, instead of knowing more than they, we prove that we know nothing as we ought to know.

2. The plural form of the word *Elohim*, used by the sacred writers to express the Divine Being, deserves attention in this argument.

„ The name given to the Former of all things is plural, *Elohim* ; yet this name is joined to singular verbs. The Scriptures speak of the Son and of the Holy Ghost being concerned in the work of creation as well as the Father.” (Dr. Fawcett.) “ The word *Elohim*, rendered God, is plural, and denotes the worshipful Ones, the Divine Persons, who were equally concerned in the creation of all things.” (Brown.)

To these authorities many more might be added ; but we shall mention only one.—“ John Xerxes, a learned Jew, who was converted in England, now about seventy years ago, published a sensible and affectionate address to his unbelieving brethren, wherein he lays before them his reasons for leaving the Jewish, and embracing the Christian religion. ‘ The Christians (says he) confess Jesus to be God, and it is this that makes us look upon the Gospels as books that overturn the very principles of religion, the truth of which is built upon this single article, the *unity of God*. In this argument lies the strength of what you object against the Christian religion.” Then he undertakes to prove that the unity of God is not what he once understood it to be, a unity of person, but of essence, under which more persons than one are comprehended ; and the first proof he offers is that of the name *Elohim*. “ What else (says he) is that frequent mention of God by nouns of the plural

number? As in Gen. i. 1, where the word *Elohim*, which is rendered God, is of the plural number, though annexed to a verb of the singular number; which demonstrates, as evidently as may be, that there are several persons partaking of the same Divine nature and essence." (Wm. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity.)

3. The frequent use of the plural form of expression in the Old Testament, when God is spoken of, is also worthy of notice in this argument.

"God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image;" and, "Behold, the man is become as one of *us*." (Gen. i. 26. iii. 22.) "Go to, let *us* go down, and confound their language." (xi. 6, 7.) "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." (xix. 24.) Two persons are here mentioned in one verse as Jehovah; a circumstance which we can hardly suppose would have been stated, had not the angel of the covenant, who appeared to Abraham in human form, and who brought this awful judgment upon these devoted cities, been a divine person in the essence of the Deity. Every other interpretation of the passage must be strained and unnatural, while this is plain and easy. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." (Num. vi. 24—26.) The word *Lord*, or *Jehovah*, being three times used, and a different accent put to each, seems to denote a plurality. Sinners are blessed with spiritual blessings by the triune God of salvation: the Father who chose, the Son who redeemed, and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies and comforts all the elect of God. "An eminent Jew, converted to Christianity in the beginning of the twelfth century, wrote a learned treatise against the Jews, wherein he presses them with this Scripture, as a plain proof that there are three to whom the incommunicable name *Jehovah* is applied." (See Jones, as before cited.)

"Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" (Isa. vi. 8.) saith the Lord; not directing his discourse to the seraphim, as if he consulted with them; for who of all crea-

tures is the Lord's counsellor? or which of them has he associated with himself in his purposes or operations? but to the Son and Spirit, who it is certain were concerned in this mission, for the following words were spoken when this prophet saw the glory of Christ, and spake of him, (John xii. 41.) and they are expressly attributed to the Holy Spirit, Acts xxviii. 25, 26.

The enemies of this doctrine have contended, that in the passages of Scripture in which the plural form of expression is used by the Divine Being, he speaks after the manner of earthly monarchs. But this is a mistake; this method of speaking by the potentates of the earth, is an invention and practice of later times, and is not at all suited to the simplicity of the first ages of the world.

The kings of Israel used to speak of themselves in the singular number, (2 Sam. iii. 28. 1 Chron. xxi. 17. 2 Chron. ii. 6.) and so did the eastern monarchs. "Darius made a decree,—I, even I, Artaxerxes, the king, do make a decree." (Ezra vi. 8; vii. 21.)

To be obliged to have recourse to an argument like this, forcibly speaks the weakness of the cause. It is highly derogatory to the Almighty to say that he adopts the pompous style of haughty kings to express things of the greatest importance.

The Scriptures were written for the poor and illiterate, as well as for the rich and the learned; but what acquaintance have they with this mode of expression?

4. If the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the divine essence be true, it may be expected that the New Testament should contain proof of it; proof of a clearer and more decided character than what is contained in the Old Testament. This may be admitted without reflecting on the dispensation now passed away. The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead is taught in the Jewish Scriptures, and the Jews believed it; but it is much more luminously set forth in the Christian Scriptures than in them, and so also is the doctrine in question.

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and, lo, the heavens were opened unto

him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 16, 17.) Three persons are here represented: Jesus Christ, baptized by John in Jordan; the Holy Spirit, descending upon Christ; the Father, from whom came the voice of approbation concerning his Son.

"If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.)—"We will come unto him." Here the actions of coming and of making abode, expressive of communion and fellowship, are ascribed to more than one. In the same chapter, (ver. 26.) Christ speaks of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in his name, to teach his disciples all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them. These passages, when taken together, plainly prove a plurality of persons in the Deity.

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 5.) Here the Apostle prays that the *Lord*, the Holy Spirit, would direct the hearts of the Thessalonians into the love of God the Father, and also into the patient waiting for Christ, or into the patience of Christ; such patience as he manifested under all his persecutions and sufferings, which highly adorns the Christian character, and into which God only can direct the hearts of his people by the almighty energy of his Spirit, who takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh.

"Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 2.) Here Peter refers to a plurality in the Deity, and teaches Christians that their salvation is attributable to the electing love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ,

who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." (Rev. i. 4, 5.) In this passage we have a description of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They are each of them prayed to for *grace* and *peace*; but no creature can be an object of prayer, nor has any creature grace and peace to bestow upon others. Prayer being an act of worship, it should be offered only to the Divine Being; but it is here offered to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, equally as to the Father. The inference is, that Christ and the Holy Spirit are divine, one with the Father.

Should any difficulty arise from this passage, the Holy Spirit being spoken of in it as the *seven spirits* before the throne, it will be removed by considering that he is so spoken of in relation to the *seven* churches, to each of which, and to all others, he is the Fountain of life, grace, and peace, being omnipotent and omnipresent, one with the Father and the Son. This manner of speaking well accords with the emblematic style of this book; any other mode of interpretation would seem to sanction the worship of created angels.

5. In the form of dedication, used in the ordinance of Christian baptism, we have another proof of this doctrine. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) These words evidently imply a plurality in that one God, to whom Christians are dedicated in baptism. It would be highly improper to dedicate one creature to the service of another, at least in a religious sense. And to suppose that the Son and the Holy Ghost are mere qualities or attributes of God, is virtually to have no God. By the same rule that the Son and the Holy Ghost are made qualities and attributes, the Father may be made so too, no more emphasis being laid by Christ upon one of these names than upon another of them: and if we suppose them all to mean qualities or attributes, in what being do they subsist?

To imagine that the Son and the Holy Ghost are creatures, and that the name *Father* implies Deity, is to suppose that creatures are associated with the Creator, and that

homage is performed to them equally as to him. A monstrous absurdity indeed !

On the principle of a plurality in the Deity the passage is easy ; and though our minds cannot comprehend this mysterious subject, we may believe and adore.

The apostolic benediction is of a similar nature, and can be understood only on the same principles. “ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all ; Amen.” (2 Cor. xiii. 14.)—Here again are three divine persons.—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ signifies his free favour, which reigns in his people through righteousness unto eternal life ; by the love of God is understood the benevolence of the Father ; and by the communion of the Holy Ghost, a participation of those gifts, and of that divine influence, by which the Corinthians would be comforted under all their persecutions and troubles, prepared for the duties of Christianity, and finally fitted for heaven.

Lastly.—The salvation of men is represented in the sacred writings as contrived by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit ;—to each of whom divine honours are ascribed. This is that glorious plan of salvation into which angels desire to look ; which develops to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. The glorious *Three* are engaged in it. Take away the deity and personality of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and the glory of the gospel will have departed ; all its excellence will have evaporated, and there will be neither atonement for sin, nor efficacious grace to bring a sinner to God.

Nor can any objection be made to this view of the Deity from the humanity of Christ, because it is admitted that he was truly man as well as truly God ; that the divine and human natures were united in him ; and that he died on the cross as man ; whilst the mysterious connexion of his divinity with his humanity added efficacy to his sacrifice, and made it of sufficient value to atone for sin, to satisfy infinite justice, and to open a way for the exercise of Divine mercy. Thus God expressed his displeasure against sin, and his appro-

bation, or love, of righteousness. Nor ought those who choose to dignify themselves with the name of *Unitarians* to object to this statement, on the ground that it makes more Gods than one; for we maintain the unity of God as well as they. But it is easier to object to an argument than to confute it.

The doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Divine Essence has been received by the Christian church in all past ages, and it is now received.—The word used to express that Essence in the Old Testament is confessedly of plural signification.—The plural mode of expression is adopted by Jehovah himself.—The form of Christian baptism, and of the apostolic benediction, plainly and unequivocally teach it.—Many other parts of the sacred writings are of the same import.—It is implied in the economy of salvation.—And we have no doubt but that, as long as truth and argument are attended to, it will stand against all opposition.

It is true that some persons calling themselves Christians have rejected this doctrine: but in this it has only shared the fate of other doctrines of Christianity. What one truth is there in the sacred oracles that has not been rejected by one or other of those who have called themselves by that name? Notwithstanding such rejection, however, this doctrine is entitled to our belief, as the above arguments have, when taken in connexion with each other, sufficiently proved. Otherwise we must suppose that God has suffered his word to be written in a manner calculated to mislead its readers, an idea that can by no means be admitted, because it would reflect on his wisdom and goodness.

CHAP. V.

ON THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

Much has already been written on this subject ; yet it may not be improper to give the reader a brief statement of it, partly on account of the connexion of scripture doctrines here treated upon, and partly on account of the place which this doctrine holds in the Christian system. This will be readily acceded to by those who rest their hope of acceptance before God on the merit of his obedience and sacrifice. To read and speak of him, is to them both pleasant and profitable ; they feel him precious to their souls, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him ; for his sake they would suffer the loss of all things, and they count them but dross, that they may win Christ and be found in him. Whoever neglects to set forth his glories, *they* cannot ; his love in the redemption of their souls, by the price of his own most precious blood, constrains them both to admire his moral beauties, and to set forth his infinite perfections.

Every truth which God has revealed is highly worthy of our regard, but some are more important than others. Christians should pay to such truths a peculiar attention, that they may both clearly understand them, and duly appreciate their value. The same holds good with respect to the human body. All its parts are wisely proportioned, arranged, and connected ; we preserve them with great care, because each is useful ; nor is the body complete without its most minute member. Yet if necessity require, some of them may be severed from the rest, and the life of the system be preserved. The blood may still flow in the veins, and the pulse continue to beat : but if the body be decapitated, death ensues ; if life do not instantly leave its se-

veral parts, it is only the fluttering remains striving to make their escape. What the head is to the human frame, that the doctrine of the Deity of Christ is to Christianity. Men may deny some of its truths; and yet upon the whole be Christians; they may separate the minor parts, and yet hold the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body is fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part; and therefore they may be united to him and to his church by vital union, and may make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. But if Christ be regarded as a mere man, or only as a deified creature, what dependence can be placed upon him as the Redeemer of sinners? It is only because he is God as well as man, that we can safely rely upon him for all spiritual blessings in this life, and for eternal felicity in the life to come.

Again. The doctrine of Christ's Deity is to Christianity, what the orb of day is to the solar system. As the planets revolve round the sun, and derive their light from him; so every Christian doctrine derives its energy from his Deity. Were this article of our faith blotted from the hemisphere of truth, we should have nothing left that could afford us true light; all would be moral darkness: but if Jesus Christ be the Lord God, and our sun and shield, he will both enlighten and defend us; he will arise upon our souls with healing in his beams, and protect us from all enemies and dangers. Between those systems, the one of which makes him a mere creature, and the other considers him as truly and properly God, there can be no congeniality; the one destroys the other, their coalescence is impossible; whoever therefore embraces the one, must renounce the other. To allow that both may be right, is to concede that it signifies not, either as to the will of the Father, or as to our own salvation, what honour we render to the Son, and in what point of view we regard his mediation. To suppose that men can be Christians while they deny the Deity of Christ, is, according to our view, to give a latitude to the meaning of that name which the Scriptures will not justify.

There is no principle of union in doctrines so opposite ; if one be true, the other must be false. Should this be thought uncharitable, we remark, that if the foundation of a building be removed, the building must fall. The character of Christ is not a mere ornament in the structure of Christianity, which may be dispensed with whilst its essential parts remain entire ; the whole of its doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, rest upon it as completely as any superstructure on its foundation. The New Testament cannot require us to relinquish the principle in which all its truths centre : whatever charity we owe to men, we owe none to their errors.

If this doctrine necessarily implied a plurality of Gods, we would renounce it as absurd and dangerous ; but no such consequence follows ; it is contained in the same volume which contains that of the unity of the divine essence. Was it impossible for Deity to assume humanity into union with itself ; or was it unworthy of the Son of God to do so, in order to complete the purposes of his Father ? It is not for us to comprehend, much less to explain, *how* the one infinite, self-existent Jehovah, has subsisted from eternity in three persons. In this point of view, as well as in many others, the name of the Messiah is “ *Wonderful.*” It is sufficient for us to know that the Word, (the divine Logos,) who was in the beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh, and is therefore called *the Son of man, the man Christ Jesus* ; that the spotless infirmities of our nature were experienced by him ; that he hungered and thirsted, and was faint and weary ; and that he is called *the Son of God*, in a sense which does not belong either to angels or men. Angels and men are called *sons of God* in respect of their creation or adoption ; but Christ is emphatically, *The Son—God’s own Son—The only begotten Son of God.* This does not suppose the transmutation of either nature into the other, or the destruction of their essential properties ; it does not suppose that the human nature became divine, or that the divine became human ; both were preserved distinct, without commixture or confusion. On this view of the person of Christ the scriptures which relate to him are

easily understood; but on any other, they appear to us inexplicable. It also places the character of the Supreme Being, the honour of his law, and the happiness of believers in Christ, in a much more interesting light than they could otherwise be placed. If we are mistaken in our view of his person, in offering to him the homage of our hearts, which is due only to Jehovah, we are guilty of idolatry, and alienate the honours of him, who will not give his glory to another. The worshippers of deified heroes, in ancient Greece or Rome, could not be guilty of so great an evil. On the other hand, if Christ be a divine person in the Godhead, and have a just claim to that homage, they who would reduce him to the level of a creature, sin not in a small degree, but in a most awful manner. Did we attempt to show the nature of the union between the Deity and the humanity, we should expose ourselves to censure, because this, though a matter of faith, does not fall within the compass of our faculties. That Christ is both God and man, is declared in the scriptures, and therefore we receive it as truth; but while we believe the fact, we have no method of explaining it; for on this part of the subject God has given us no information. We admit it on the same authority that we admit the unity and plurality in the divine essence. Attempting to explain what it is impossible for us to comprehend, has done injury to the cause of truth; but if, going to the contrary extreme, we will believe nothing but those things the *manner* of which we can comprehend, we act absurdly. It should always be remembered, whilst men may believe on the name of the Son of God, and shall therefore have everlasting life, who yet have not sufficient understanding to write wisely about him, that whosoever believeth not on the Son of God, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Receiving Jesus Christ, in the scriptural sense of that expression, is the turning point of salvation. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Rejecting him renders it impossible that we should sustain the relation of sons and daughters to the Lord God Almighty; but if we

do not receive him in his true character, we do not receive him at all. Nor will any external attention we may pay to him or to his gospel be accepted by him, unless accompanied with a living faith in his obedience and sacrifice.

Christ has claimed attributes which cannot belong to a creature, and has made himself equal with God. But would a mere creature, whether angel or man, sent from God to instruct us in divine truth, lay claim to attributes which did not belong to him, or to the possession of the same divine nature? Hear what he says. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father."—"I and my Father are one."—"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."—And, (addressing the Father,) "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." He claimed the prerogative of acting in the same sovereign manner as the Father does; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He challenged the same honour to himself that is given to his Father; "All men should honour the Son, as they honour the Father." But would he have spoken thus, had he not been conscious that he was One with the Father in power and glory? When one of his disciples requested that he would show them the Father, he replied, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father—Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me;" thereby intimating their essential union, and mutual indwelling. What propriety is there in these expressions, on any other principle than that he was a divine person; one with the Father in the Godhead? Or how can we receive him to the salvation of our souls, unless we believe in him according to their true import? Should it be said that Christ, though a created being, might use this language as the Ambassador, or Representative, of God; we reply that persons acting in that capacity do not speak in such terms. What would be thought of an ambassador, who should declare that his sovereign was in him, and he in his sovereign? that he was one with his sovereign, and his sovereign one with him? Of an ambassador who should lay claim to whatever belonged to his sovereign, and declare that they had a mutual right in each other's property? Of

one who should declare that he did what his sovereign did, in the same manner, according to his own will, and with the same authority; and that he had a right to the same honour as that which was rendered to his sovereign? and that whosoever had seen him, had seen his sovereign? An ambassador who should speak thus, would be considered as a lunatic, and banished from the court of any prince upon earth. Had we therefore no other proof of the Deity of Christ than what arises out of his own declarations, allowing him to be sent of God and to be influenced by his Spirit, this would be sufficient. Had he been no more than a servant, he would not, indeed he could not, have spoken as he did. But being one with his Father in the Divine nature, though for the love he bore to sinful men he emptied himself, and assumed the form of a servant, he could use this language with propriety.

So intimate is the personal connexion between the Father and the Son, founded on the identity of their essence, that whosoever believeth on the one, believeth on the other; and whosoever knoweth the one, knoweth the other. "So equal is this personal fellowship, that the unity of mind and counsel which characterizes the equal disciples of the same Lord, is compared to the unity which subsists between *these two*; "that they may be one, even as *we* are one." Nothing indeed can be much more striking, or more evidently unsuitable to the condition and circumstances of any mere creature, than the familiar use which, in speaking of himself and God the Father Almighty, our Lord has made of the pronouns, *we*, *us*, *our*. "If any man love me, cried the Saviour, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make *our* abode with him." This is a mode of speech, with which, (as it relates to the Deity,) nothing that I know of can be justly compared, but the phraseology adopted by Jehovah himself in the Old Testament; Let us make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness; Behold the man is become as one of *Us*, to know good and evil." (J. J. Gurney.) But we must not stay longer on general observations; we shall therefore proceed to take a short view of the names ascribed to Christ—the attributes applied

to him—the works which in the Scriptures are said to have been performed by him—his universal dominion—his power of forgiving sin—his being the object of religious worship—and his judging the world. On this subject we must appeal, not to the laws of councils or the decrees of synods, but to the word of God. Our faith must not stand on human, but on divine authority. And if true, abundant evidence of it is to be expected; for it is not to be supposed that a doctrine of the first importance would be ambiguously expressed. If Jesus Christ be God, the sacred writers must have told us so in plain terms; but if he have no claim to the names and attributes of Deity, or if he did not perform divine works, their integrity as men, independent of their inspiration, would prevent them from giving the least reason for such a conclusion. A book written under the immediate direction of God, and intended by him to cure the world of idolatry, and to bring it to the knowledge of himself as the one living and true God, would not have the least tendency to lead men into that very sin. It may therefore be safely concluded, if the perfections, which belong exclusively to the self-existent Being, are by the language of inspiration ascribed to Jesus Christ, that he is truly and properly God.

I. Divine NAMES are ascribed to Christ. He is called God, in the highest sense of that word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John i. 1.) It is not credible that the beloved apostle would have spoken thus in the very introduction of his Gospel, if he did not mean to assert the Deity of Christ. Had he known that he was no more than a man, or that he was a created being, he would not have made so unqualified a declaration respecting him; which in that case must mislead his readers, and justly expose himself to censure; to suppose which implies something very contrary to the ingenuousness and meekness, the humility and affection, by which his writings are characterized. “I know (says the excellent Dr. Doddridge) how eagerly many have contended, that the word God is used here in an inferior sense; the necessary consequence of which is, (as indeed some have expressly

avowed,) that this clause should be rendered, "The Word was a God;" that is, a kind of inferior Deity, as governors are called gods. But it is impossible, he should here be so called merely as a *governor*; because he is spoken of as existing before the production of any creatures whom he could govern: and it is to me most incredible, that when the Jews were so exceedingly averse to idolatry, and the Gentiles so unhappily prone to it, such a plain writer as this apostle should lay so dangerous a stumbling-block on the very threshold of his work, and represent it as the Christian doctrine, that in the beginning of all things there were two gods, one supreme, and the other subordinate: a difficulty which, if possible, would be yet farther increased, by recollecting, what so many ancient writers assert, that this Gospel was written with a particular view of opposing the Cerinthians and Ebionites, on which account a greater accuracy of expression must have been necessary."

"The Jews were constantly taught in their synagogues, that the Word of God was the same as God; and that by the *Word* all things were made, which undoubtedly was the cause why John delivered so great a mystery in so few words, as speaking unto them, who at the first apprehension understood him. Only that which they knew not was, that this "Word was made flesh," and that this Word made flesh was Jesus Christ." (Bp. Pearson.) It has indeed been thought by some persons, that the evangelist referred to the speculations of Plato, or his disciples, in the term *Word* or *Logos*, which that philosopher used; but the above learned writer has shown, that this way of speaking was in use before Platonism was introduced among the Jews: and Jerome, in his note on Ezek. i. 24, says that the Septuagint translate the words, rendered in our version "the voice of the Almighty," *the voice of the Logos*, or second person in the Trinity. (See Scott's Note on John i. 1. eighth edition.) "The word God is used eleven times in this chapter in its proper sense: nor can one instance be produced in the whole New Testament, where, in the singular number, it is used in any other sense. Is it then reasonable to conceive that it is here used in that improper

sense in which it never is again once used throughout this Gospel, or in the whole New Testament, rather than in that sense in which it is continually used in all other places?" (Whitby.)

When magistrates are called gods, the Holy Spirit still adds something which excludes them from divinity; as that they shall die like men; or, that they are the rulers of the people. Whereas, when Christ is called God, it is with some epithet belonging to Deity; as, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever." (Rom. ix. 5.)—"The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.) This last passage, in the judgment of some eminent critics, should be rendered, "The great God, *even* our Saviour Jesus Christ." The glorious appearing of which Paul there speaks is not to be understood of the Father, but of the Son, who is the Judge of the world.—"He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." (Rev. xvii. 14.)—"The mighty God.—The everlasting Father." (Isai. ix. 6.)—"The true God, and eternal life." (1 John v. 20.) Eternal life, in the style of this apostle, means the Lord Jesus Christ, who may be so called, because he has eternal life inherent in himself. "To paraphrase this passage of the *true religion*, is quite enervating the force of scripture, and taking a liberty with plain words by no means to be allowed. It is an argument for the deity of Christ; and which I think none who have opposed it, have so much as appeared to answer." (Doddridge). "He that is holy, he that is true." (Rev. iii. 7.) Or, as this passage is rendered by some learned men, "*The Holy One; The true One;*" Jesus Christ, who liveth and was dead, but is alive for evermore, and has the keys of the invisible world. Holiness dwells essentially in him. He is also the Fountain of truth, who cannot lie, nor be imposed upon.—"Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders. And they saw the God of Israel—they saw God, and did eat and drink." (Exod. xxiv. 9—11.) No man hath seen God the Father at any time; Christ must therefore be the God of Israel.

2. *Jehovah* is the incommunicable name of God, and denotes his eternal existence. In no sense can this name be

applied to a created being ; but it is often applied in the writings of the prophets to Jesus Christ. Here it should be remarked, *and kept in mind*, that wherever in the Old Testament, the word LORD is thus printed in capital letters, it is intended to show that the word in the original is JEHOVAH. “ Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” (Isaiah vi. 5.) We have the authority of an inspired evangelist to apply this to Jesus Christ. “ These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” (John xii. 41.)—The LORD of hosts himself was to be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel. This was fulfilled by the conduct of the Jews towards Christ. “ They stumbled at that stumbling stone ; as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence.” (See Rom. ix. 33, 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.)—The evangelist Matthew (chap. iii. 3.) refers to Isaiah, (xl. 3.) and shows, that he whose way was prepared by John the Baptist, was the LORD, Jehovah of hosts, who in Malachi (chap. iii. 1.) says, “ Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.”—“ He, that is, the Lord GOD, shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” (Isai. xl. 10, 11.) As this is an evident prophecy of Christ, and as he is the good Shepherd, and the chief Shepherd ; so he must be Israel’s God, and the Lord Jehovah. Nor can this prophecy be otherwise interpreted, without obscuring and wresting its plain meaning, and causing this most elegant and sublime of all writers to express himself in a very improper and discordant manner ; or rather, without representing the language of the Holy Spirit as calculated to mislead the simple and honest reader. But those who deny the Deity of the Son of God are thus guilty, by preferring the dictates of their own reason to the plain and pointed declarations of God’s word.

II. Not only are divine names ascribed to Jesus Christ, but the ATTRIBUTES of Deity are applied to him.

1. Eternity. This attribute is peculiar to the self-existent Being ; yet the sacred writers ascribe it to Jesus Christ ; the inference is obvious, he must be God. “ But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the

thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." (Mic. v. 2.) The words naturally import an existence prior to the birth of Christ, which existence is here described to be from eternity; for so the words translated *from of old*, best rendered from everlasting, (Hab. i. 12,) from the days of eternity, (Margin,) do plainly signify." (Lowth.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." (John viii. 58.) The following is a literal translation of Calmet's note on this passage: 'I am from all eternity. I have existed before all ages. You consider in me only the person who speaks to you, and who has appeared to you within a particular time. But besides this human nature, which ye think ye know, there is in me a divine and eternal nature. Both united subsist together in my person. Abraham knew how to distinguish them. He adored me as his God, and desired me as his Saviour. He has seen me in my eternity, and predicted my coming into the world.'" (Dr. A. Clarke.)—Again: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Rev. i. 10, 11, 17.) That this was Jesus Christ is evident; he died on the cross, arose from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God. This interpretation is confirmed by the prophet Isaiah. "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah God of Hosts: I am the First, and I am the Last, and besides me there is no God. Hearken unto me, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel whom I have called: I am He, I am the First, and I am the Last. Yea, my hand hath spanned the heavens: I summon them, they present themselves together." (Lowth's translation of Isa. xlv. 6, and xlviii. 12, 13.

—The eternity of Christ is also proved from his having created all things; for as he existed before any thing was made, he himself must be uncreated, and therefore eternal.

2. Omnipotence. However powerful any creature may be, his power must necessarily be derived and finite, and can only be exercised in subjection to him from whom it is derived. Uncontrolled power is the prerogative of Almighty God, and is that by which he subdues all things unto himself. This belongs to Jesus Christ. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) Nothing less than the energy which produced the body at the first, can raise it from its degraded state, and call it to that state in which it shall resemble the glorified body of Jesus Christ. When he was on the earth, he exercised his power over diseases, life, and death: the elements of this world, and the prince of darkness. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The bread, with which he fed the two companies of four and five thousand came into existence in obedience to his good pleasure. His Omnipotence also appears in the creation of all things by the word of his power, which we shall notice in the future part of this argument.

3. Omniscience. That God may govern the world with equity, and at the day of judgment reward every man according to his works, it is necessary that he should know all things; nor could his nature be perfect without this knowledge. If therefore it can be proved that this attribute belongs to Jesus Christ, it will be an additional proof that he is God. When the Apostle Peter was pressed with the question, "Lovest thou me?" he replied, "Yea, Lord, *thou knowest all things*, thou knowest that I love thee." Had not this been true, Jesus would not have suffered it to pass without contradiction, as, to say the least, it was liable to a wrong interpretation; for it proceeded on the principle that Jesus knew the inward workings of Peter's mind,

that though he had been deficient in proof of his affection, nevertheless he knew that he sincerely loved him. Would any good man have suffered such an expression, in reference to himself, to pass without notice? Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, said to Jehovah, "Thou, even thou *only*, knowest the hearts of all the children of men."—Again, Jesus Christ says of himself, (Rev. ii. 23.) "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." This is the peculiar language of Deity, and can be accounted for only on the ground of the Omniscience of the Son of God. He who knows the Father must be omniscient, and he who is known to the Father only, is incomprehensible by all created beings: but both these Jesus claimed to himself. (Matt. xi. 27.)—Again: He did not commit himself unto his enemies, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man. Every reader of the four Gospels must have observed how frequently it is said, "Jesus knowing their thoughts,—But he knowing their thoughts." He therefore knows all things, and must be God.

4. Omnipresence. This attribute of Deity belongs to Jesus Christ. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) This so perfectly agrees with the promise, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee," (Exod. xx. 24.) that this attribute evidently belongs to both. Jesus, to encourage his disciples under the view of their parting with him as to his corporal presence, promised them, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxvii. 20.) Could he fulfil this promise if he were not present with them in all places at the same time? Ubiquity in the Old Testament is ascribed to Jehovah, and is considered as a proof of his infinity. In the New Testament it is thus claimed by Christ. But the man Jesus was not capable of being in different places at the same time; he could not be in the borders of Zebulun, and in Jerusalem, at the same moment; and therefore had he no presence besides his

bodily presence, he could not continue with his ministers and people to the end of the world. None but God could say these things with truth. There are thousands of assemblies collected at the same moment, and thousands of faithful ministers labouring among them; can any but God be in the midst of all these congregations, and with all these ministers? The very thought is revolting. But the Son of God is in the midst of each, he is with them at all times, and in all places, and therefore he is Omnipresent. Again. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven." (John iii. 13.)—He also conversed with Nicodemus on earth, while his divine nature filled the heavenly world. He was therefore on earth and in heaven at the same time.

Finally, Immutability. This attribute of Deity gives stability to the promises of God.—"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. iii. 6.) That stream of goodness which perpetually enriches the earth with the bounties of providence, and secures to the redeemed the immense blessings of grace, flows from the unchangeable beneficence of the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. God alone is immutable. If therefore we prove that this attribute belongs to Jesus Christ, he must be God. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews has applied it to him. (Psal. cii. 25—27.) "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." This passage is brought to prove the superiority of Christ to angels. In any other view, it could not be to the writer's purpose, and he must have been guilty of bringing into his argument what could have no connexion with it; but, understood of Christ, it establishes his immutability. It also contrasts him with the works of his hands: they shall perish, but he remains; they shall be changed, but he is the same; they shall wax old,

but his years shall have no end. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" eternal, and immutable. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

III. Jesus Christ is proved to be a divine person by the WORKS which are ascribed to him.

1. The creation of the heavens and of the earth is that by which Jehovah is frequently distinguished from the idols of the heathen. "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the LORD; and there is none else." In the New Testament the creation of all things is ascribed to Christ. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." (John i. 10.) "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of the whole creation. For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible, and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." Could any man, knowing the use of language, give a more emphatic and explicit description of Deity than is contained in these words? To interpret them of a spiritual creation, as some have done to get rid of the inference deduced from the true interpretation, is to make every thing visible and invisible a part of this creation; but who would ever think that the sun, moon, and stars; the earth and all things that move upon the face of it; with all invisible beings good and bad; are distinct parts of a spiritual creation? Yet even were this admitted, we should maintain that divine energy is as necessary in the one case as in the other. To suppose that all things were created by a mere delegated power, according to the opinion of others, is contrary to our ideas of Deity. These passages contain so conclusive an argument for the Godhead of Christ, and appeal so forcibly to candid and ingenuous minds, that the far-fetched interpretations brought to overturn that argument will ever be ineffectual.

2. Christ is not only the Creator of all things, but he is the Preserver of them. "He is before all things, and by him all things consist." "He upholdeth all things by the

word of his power." This necessarily implies a knowledge of all things, and an energy present in every place sufficient to sustain the whole universe in existence, and to maintain its order and harmony. Thus he who created all things out of nothing, constantly keeps them from returning to nothing. Every thing individually and all things collectively, whether relating to the systems of nature, of providence, or of grace, depend on him. (Col. i. 15—17.) His shoulders bear the weighty load; (Isa. ix. 6.) a load which must have crushed all created beings underneath it; but *he* is able to perform the mighty work.

IV. Universal DOMINION is attributed to Christ. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Psalm lxxii. 8.) "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. vii. 13, 14.) Can these Scriptures be applied to a mere man? Is he to whom every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; who must be confessed by every tongue to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father, being one with him; is he, it is asked, a mere man?

V. The power of FORGIVING SIN, the exclusive prerogative of God, and of bestowing all other spiritual blessings, is also the prerogative of Christ. He said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some of the scribes who were present, said, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" In this they spoke correctly: for none can forgive sins, but the Being against whom they are committed: for any creature to lay claim to it is presumption. It was, however, as easy for Christ to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," as for him to say, "Arise, and walk." To enable a paralytic to arise and walk, required divine energy, just as to forgive sins is the divine prerogative. This is not

the only instance of Christ's forgiving sins, for we are exhorted to forbear one with another, as he has forgiven us. (Col. iii. 3.) The salutations prefixed to the apostolic epistles represent Christ as the author also of all spiritual favours. *Grace, mercy, and peace*, are the greatest favours divine benevolence bestows upon guilty man; and yet they are prayed for from Christ, as well as from the Father; for which no man can account except upon the principle of their equality with each other. No creature has grace, mercy, and peace to bestow upon other creatures: he must receive them himself from Almighty God.

VI. Jesus Christ is represented in the Scriptures as the object of religious WORSHIP. "He that in these things (righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost) serveth Christ, is acceptable to God.—They who cause divisions and offences serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." (Rom. xiv. 17, 18; xvi. 17, 18.)—The adorations of the heavenly hosts are rendered to Christ in union with the Father, without the least intimation of difference between them; nor is he ever represented as joining with the spirits of the celestial world in these exercises. They sang, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." In this they were joined by all creatures in the universe, with the exception of the enemies of God, who in the end will be put under his feet. The song of the whole was, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." (Rev. v.) The Father and the Son share in this general ascription of praise. Do we ever hear any thing like this of the patriarchs, of the prophets, of the apostles? Was ever Moses, or David, or Paul, or Peter, joined with the Father as the object of common praise? If Christ be only a creature, how came it to pass that he was not included in every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea? If he be a creature, where was he? Again, if he be a creature, how came he, in union with his Father, to be the object of praise by *all* creatures?

VII. The Saviour will sit in judgment on the souls of men. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (John v. 28, 29. 2 Cor. v. 10.)—"The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment to the Son." This makes it necessary to understand all those passages of the Scriptures in which it is said that God will judge the world; of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge both the quick and the dead; and it also proves that the Father acts not without the Son, nor the Son without the Father. No appeal can be made to the Father from the award of the Son, for he forfeited not his claim to supreme power and universal judgment by becoming manifest in the flesh; and to refuse to acknowledge this because of his infinite grace and condescension, is the height of ingratitude. It is evident that the office of "Judge of all men" must require Divine perfections, absolutely incommunicable to any creature. Infinite justice must be displayed, as well as infinite knowledge, in giving to every man as his work shall be. The different degrees of bliss must be proportioned to the degrees of holiness possessed by the righteous, and the degrees of punishment to those of sin in the finally impenitent, that the whole intelligent creation may be convinced of the equity of the proceedings of the last and solemn day.

We will close this short view of the character of Christ by recapitulating its several parts.—Besides the proofs of his Deity which we have noticed as arising out of his own words, and the familiar manner in which he associated himself with the Father, he is called, God—The great God—The King of kings—The Lord of lords—The mighty God—The everlasting Father—The true God—Eternal Life—The holy One—The true One—And Jehovah. Eternity—Omnipotence—Omniscience—Omnipresence—and Immutability are ascribed to him. He created all things—He upholds all things—He possesses universal dominion—He forgives sin, and bestows grace, mercy, and peace on his

creatures—He is the object of religious worship.—And he will judge the world. We therefore feel no difficulty in acknowledging him as our God and Saviour.

But some readers may say, After all, we cannot believe that Jesus Christ is equal with his Father. To such we reply, We cannot help your unbelief; but we take our leave of you with this caution, Take care that your rejection of the Son of God in his true character do not prove your eternal ruin. “Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

That He who is God over all should condescend to become Emmanuel, God with us, to accomplish our redemption—that he who was God’s Fellow, should, in order to become the Shepherd of his people, and to make them his peculiar flock, have the sword of divine justice drawn against him—that he should bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that our moral maladies might be healed by his stripes, and our guilty souls saved from wrath,—lays a foundation for our eternal gratitude. It should greatly endear him to our hearts, and encourage our confidence in his merits. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him; his blood cleanseth us from all sin; and faith in him justifies us before God. Let us then beg of God to enable us to glory in him, who bestows every blessing in the present life; who gives solid consolation in the hour of death; and after death a glorious immortality. Amen.

CHAP. VI.

ON THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST.

By the sins of mankind the laws of God are violated, and his righteous government dishonoured. His injured justice therefore demands satisfaction; and this satisfaction must be made, either by the sinner in his own person, or by his substitute and surety. No one could be this substitute and surety but the Son of God. He only was able to bear our sins, to become a propitiatory sacrifice, and thus to make an atonement or expiation for them. In consequence of this satisfaction having been made to the divine justice, the sinner, exercising repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, is pardoned, the divine perfections and government are honoured, mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other.

An experimental acquaintance with this doctrine results from believing and approving views of the moral law; of the divine justice in requiring a sacrifice for sin; of the character of the Saviour; of the efficacy of his blood to atone for iniquity, and to cleanse the conscience from dead works; and of the honour rendered to the divine perfections by this way of salvation. Such persons will not deny the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ. It is the joy and rejoicing of their heart; and they build their hope of future happiness upon it, without fear of shame or disappointment at the last day.

The theory of the doctrine is easy of comprehension even where this acquaintance with it is not experienced; and it is only by perverting the language of the New Testament, that it can be denied or concealed. This is evident from

the strong inclination manifested by those who deny this doctrine, and also that with which it is inseparably connected, the Deity of Christ, to weaken and misinterpret that language, in order to make it agree with their unscrip-
tural sentiments. The plain expressions of God's word are against them; and therefore they must be made by them altogether figurative, or be exchanged for expressions less emphatical. The causes of this conduct, it is to be feared, are the pride of human nature, which is unwilling to submit to a doctrine that annihilates human merit in the work of salvation,—and the vain endeavour of human reason to comprehend the mysteries of revelation.

The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of mankind display the heinousness of sin, and the displeasure of God against it, in a much stronger degree than could have been effected by the execution of his wrath upon the offenders; while thereby a way is opened for the exercise of mercy towards them, and for their reconciliation to himself; for their purification from all sin, and for their eternal happiness. Of all the doctrines of the gospel, the belief of none is more necessary to salvation than the belief of this: whatever, therefore, tends to lessen that necessity should not only be dreaded as dangerous, but regarded as highly injurious. “We are justified by the blood of Christ, and saved from wrath through him.” This expression regards his death as an atoning sacrifice, and as being meritorious for our justification before God.

When God is said to be pacified, it does not suppose that he is subject to the perturbations of mind to which we are liable; but this language is used in accommodation to our capacity. Being an infinitely pure Spirit, he cannot be affected like sinful men; yet this does not render the atonement unnecessary, nor does it nullify the scriptural view of the doctrine:—“That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.” (Ezek. xvi. 63.) It became God to act thus, that he might display his spotless holiness and his inflexible justice in union with his mercy.

In the economy of redemption the infinite wisdom and boundless goodness of Jehovah are so combined, as at once to display their united excellencies : and even all the perfections of the blessed God concentrate their beauties in it. The sun, moon, and stars—the various seasons of the year—with all the blessings of providence, set forth the power and greatness of God ; but in the cross of Christ the beams of the divine glory emit their most effulgent rays.

It seems improper to say that it belonged entirely to divine sovereignty to determine whether man should be saved by the death of Christ, or in any other way ; for this not only reflects on divine wisdom, but also lessens the value of the atonement, by making its necessity and efficacy depend, not on any intrinsic worth or fitness in itself, more than on any other means, but solely on the divine appointment. As it *became* God to save man in this way, rather than in any other, it must be the result of his incomprehensible wisdom, and most conducive to his glory. If a sacrifice of less dignity and worth had been sufficient for this purpose, God would not have given his beloved Son ; but, as it was not, he did not spare him, but freely gave him to the death of the cross. Sin being committed against an infinitely holy Being, and therefore, in a relative point of view, being infinite in its nature, any sacrifice less than that which the Son of God offered on the cross, could not have answered the purpose of the pardon and restoration of the offenders. Whatever should be tendered in the name of a satisfaction ought to be *full*, and adequate to the wrong done, as well as to the favours afterwards to be shown to the transgressors. With reverence we may say, that it would have been dishonourable to God to have insisted on a less sacrifice than that of Christ, for it were manifestly less dishonourable to him, and less unworthy of him, not to have required any satisfaction at all, than to have accepted, in the name of a sacrifice, what was beneath his own dignity. What had been lower, must have been infinitely lower ; since any thing less than God falls infinitely short of him. The divine justice being infinite, the satisfaction made to it must be infinite likewise. Less than this would have been to subvert

the design of a satisfaction altogether, to make the dignity of heaven cheap, and to depreciate the divine government instead of rendering it august and great.

The person of Emmanuel, God with us, or God in our nature, and his active and passive obedience, were the only apt, suitable, and sufficient offering that could be presented to God on this occasion. That which it *became* the Almighty to do, was, and must be worthy of him; and any thing short of or different from it, would have been unworthy of him,—contrary to his wisdom, holiness, and truth. And therefore to set aside the sufferings of Christ as an atoning sacrifice, necessary in itself for the bringing of men to glory, is to reflect on the divine wisdom and goodness, by supposing that the death of Christ was not necessary to our salvation, but that there might have been remission without the shedding of his blood. When we consider the infinite wisdom of the supreme Being, and the meanness and insignificance of sinful mortals, we may wonder that any person can indulge such a thought; it seems contrary to the whole tenor of the word of God.

They who look for future happiness, but reject the atonement of Christ, must rely on their own repentance for acceptance with God, or suppose that he will of his own mere mercy, notwithstanding their transgressions against him, receive them into his favour; both of which suppositions are contrary to truth. Some persons who object to the peculiar nature of Christ's death, would have us believe that the justice of God is modified by his goodness; and that, under his administration, there can be no need for the exercise of punitive justice on penitent offenders. Yet we never read in the sacred writings, that God pardons sin, and reconciles sinners to himself, upon their own repentance, as a satisfaction for their sins; but, on the contrary, that our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" but repentance is not shedding of blood; therefore something more was necessary. If there could be no remission of sin without shedding of

blood, it must follow, either that God does not forgive sin at all, or that blood has been shed for its remission. Not the blood of bulls, or of goats, which could never take away sin; but that of Christ, whereby he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. "Who sees not that this was the determinate judgment of God, namely, that his gracious designs towards guilty man were not otherwise to be effected than in this way? And yet for the further clearing of this matter, take Heb. x. 4, where the blood of the Lord Christ, and of bulls and of goats, are put in direct opposition to each other; and hereupon, that it is said of the latter, It is not possible it should take away sin: what can that imply less than that the former *was* necessary to the taking it away? Let us but appeal to ourselves, what else can it mean? Shall we say, that though sin could not be taken away by the blood of bulls and goats, it might by some nobler sacrifice, of an intermediate value. But is not this manifestly precluded by the immediateness of the opposition? These two only are in competition, and it is said, not *this*, but *that*. Other sacrifices God would not; then saith our Lord, Lo! I come. *Those* are rejected, *this* is chosen; he taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." (Howe.) The doctrine of atonement for sin by the cross of Christ is the life and spirit of the Christian religion; the centre wherein all its lines meet, and the circle wherein the great doctrines of revelation move. If no man can redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, millions of apostate men could not be redeemed by the death of one like themselves; nor could an angel, had he assumed human nature, and died in their stead, have atoned for their guilt: this could only be done by him whose dignity could give sufficient efficacy to his death, to make it an adequate and honourable expiation.

The early institution of sacrifices; the Mosaic economy; the writings of the prophets and of the apostles—all illustrate this doctrine. The Gentiles lost the true knowledge of God, yet entertained such a dread of his displeasure, and such a persuasion of his placability by sacrifice, that they even offered to him their own children. Awful as this was, it showed

that they considered sin as expiable only by a sacrifice of great value; and it might owe its origin to the intention of Abraham to offer up his son Isaac, which typified the offering of Jesus Christ. Such a practice as that of sacrifice having so widely prevailed, can lead to no other conclusion than that it derived its origin from revelation; and though this revelation was corrupted or lost, tradition preserved the practice founded upon it. A guilty man, if left to himself, could never imagine that the Deity was to be appeased by taking away the life of any of his creatures. The sacrifices of blood and death, could not have been offered to God without impiety; much less would they have been accepted by him, but for his own appointment.

This illustrates what is said respecting the sons of our first parents;—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." But he could not have offered in *faith*, unless he had had a revelation of the will of God in that respect. It is probable, that beasts slain under the influence of this principle furnished the skins with which Adam and Eve were clothed, (Gen. iii. 21). "It is supposed they were not slain for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the great sacrifice which should be offered one for all. Thus the first thing that died was a sacrifice, or Christ in a figure; who is therefore said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Henry.) The sacrifices offered by Noah, Abraham, and Job, were all expressive of the original law, and more or less pointed to the same object. The same also applies to the Mosaical dispensation. We recognize the same authority, and the same end, in the Levitical institutions. (They were shadows of good things to come.) The ordinances and ceremonies of this economy resembled the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and the several blessings conferred upon believers through him. They had no efficacy in themselves, but were typical representations of the great sacrifice, which was to be offered once in the end of the world, to put away sin. The whole of that dispensation taught the holiness of God and the claims of his justice. In admitting a substitute for the guilty, it expressed the doctrine of imputation; and represented him of whom Moses in the

law and the prophets did write. The imposition of hands upon the head of the victim, united with the confession of sin, was a symbolical translation of sin to the sacrifice, and a deprecation of the evil due to the offender on its account; which, when attended by faith in the promised seed, was acceptable to God, and became the medium of a complete expiation, not of their ceremonial pollutions only, but of all their iniquities. After which the animal is said to have been so polluted, as to pollute the person who carried it away; yet it remained intrinsically the same. And herein it was an eminent type of him on whom Jehovah laid the iniquities of his people, who, though he bare those iniquities, was in his nature untainted by sin. To suppose that the sacrificial economy of the Jews was adopted by the Lord in accommodation to the absurdities of pagan superstition, is derogatory from his supreme glory; yet should that even be allowed, the question of the origin of sacrifice still returns. Did those absurdities originate in human, or divine authority? If any man assert that they were altogether human in their origin, let him search the pages of universal history, and point it out to us. If this be impossible, we must conclude that he is mistaken; and that those very absurdities of the heathens originated in the corruption of a divine institution; a corruption wholly attributable to the depravity of human nature, which depraved nature is chargeable with all its evil consequences.

The prophetic writings unite in this grand subject. They speak of other things as the circumstances of the times in which the prophets lived required, both as to the Israelitish nation, and as to other nations; but in this doctrine all their lines centre. Their language is not generally so express as that of the apostles; yet, in some instances, they were favoured with such views of the events recorded in the New Testament, that the coincidence is evident. The Spirit which was in them testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow. When our Lord's disciples, through their remaining prejudices, could not reconcile his death with the purposes for which they imagined that he came into the world, and were perplexed

in their minds on that account, he addressed them as one filled with surprise at their ignorance : “ O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? ” As though he had said,—“ According to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the eternal counsels of God with respect to the salvation of his people, it was indispensably necessary that the Messiah should die in the behalf of sinners ; rise again for their justification ; and in their name take possession of his glory. Having therefore these prophecies in your hands, you ought to have been better acquainted with them.” If this then was the case with them, surely we who have the writings of the evangelists and the apostles, in which this doctrine shines as with meridian splendour, must be highly culpable if we reject it. It is the only foundation on which we can safely rest our hope of immortality and eternal life.

The liiid chapter of Isaiah is more like a history of the sufferings of Christ, than a prophecy of them. It declares their nature with such exactness, and their consequences with such clearness and force, that infidelity must blush, and shrink from a close investigation, and from a comparison of them with the events recorded in the gospel history. “ Nor is there any prophecy that fills the Jewish Rabbins with more perplexities, or drives them into more absurdities and contradictions. That it is the Messiah, and none other, spoken of in this chapter, we have not only the evidence of the text and context, and the nature of the subject matter treated of, with the utter impossibility of applying the thing spoken of to any other person, without the overthrow of the faith of the whole ancient church, but also all the advantage from the confession of the Jews that can be expected, or that need to be desired from adversaries.” (Owen). The bare reading of this chapter, and the comparing of it with the gospel history, have, according to Lowth, converted some infidels. But its whole force and propriety, and even its truth, are connected with the doctrine of the atonement. Deprive it of the energy and spirit infused into it by this doctrine, and it loses all its excellency.

The prophet Daniel foretold that the Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself; that he should finish transgression, make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Zechariah foretold that a fountain should be opened for sin and uncleanness; but if repentance of itself were sufficient to obtain forgiveness, and to do away the stain of sin, this fountain could not be necessary, nor should we know on what principle to account for the fact. This prophet refers to the same subject when he says, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." During the season of God's patience, the sword of divine justice seemed to sleep; but in that important hour when the types and shadows were to be accomplished, and satisfaction made for sin, it was commanded to awake; yet it was against no ordinary person, but the *Man* who, in his divine nature, is the *Equal* of Jehovah.

Had the evangelists and apostles been silent on this subject, we must have sought a different meaning for those passages of the prophets quoted above; but, as the sacred penmen illustrate and confirm the meaning of each other, we are fully satisfied that our interpretation is according to truth. When our Lord wished to rebuke the ambition of his disciples, he assured them that whosoever of them would be greatest must be servant to all, and resemble himself, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. The following passages of the apostolic writings are full to the point. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 25, 26.) From this passage it appears, that, in remitting the punishment due to sins committed in time past, through the forbearance of God, he neither had respect to the repentance, nor to the subsequent good works of his people; and that he did not, for this purpose, ultimately respect the legal sacrifices, but the engagements of

the sinners' Surety, and the atonement he was at length to make for their sin: and that he thus practically declared, in the presence of the universe, his inflexible justice, and his infinite holiness; his abhorrence of sin, and his determination to maintain the honour of his government. "Who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." (Eph. v. 2.) "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) "Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) This selection is but small in comparison of what might easily be made, yet it is more than sufficient to establish the doctrine. These writers would not have used such language, had they not wished their readers to understand, that the death of Christ was a sacrifice for sin; especially when they were writing to a people, the ceremonies of whose religion were entirely sacrificial. This, instead of showing them the way of salvation, their grand object, would have involved their writings in obscurity, not to say absurdity. No rational account can be given of the sacrifices and services of the Jewish dispensation, but by admitting the doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ; nor does it seem possible, on any other system, to give a fair and just interpretation of the apostolic writings.

If any thing more were necessary on this subject, we might refer to the state of mind manifested by Jesus under his sufferings. When death appeared to him, it presented itself with more than usual bitterness; with circumstances peculiarly distressing. He was in an "*agony*;"—he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. What could so overwhelm him with consternation and dismay, but the consideration that his death was really an expression of divine displeasure against sin; and that, in passing through it, his soul was actually made *an offering for sin*? This accounts for that otherwise inexplicable fact. Had Jesus died merely in confirmation of his doctrine, we cannot suppose it would have been thus. Who can find any other

way of accounting for his unparalleled distress, in the view of his death, but by the peculiar circumstances of his condition? Which of all God's servants ever so cried out under their greatest sufferings? And can we imagine that the most worthy—the dearest of all—his beloved Son—the Lord of life and glory, had less strength and fortitude than any other of his servants? This could not be. We must conclude, therefore, that he died in the stead of sinners, having their sins imputed to him; and that, on this account, it was necessary that he should feel the righteous indignation of his heavenly Father. This extorted from him that most bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But he conquered when he fell. Sin and Satan were vanquished; sinners were redeemed; and a proper occasion given for that heavenly song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

The doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ is confirmed by evidence so various, and so conclusive, that it appears strange any should attempt to evade its force; especially they who profess a desire to understand the will of God. But when we consider the depravity of human nature, and recollect that no natural qualifications, nor acquired advantages, are sufficient to remove the ignorance and prejudice of the carnal mind, or to teach the true knowledge of God, we account for the fact, and feel the necessity of divine influence.

To this subject there belongs a question which has divided the wisest and best men in the church of God; namely, the extent of the death of Christ.

Upon the subject of the extent of redemption, whilst I hold the particularity of it, I at the same time maintain with Witsius, Dr. Owen, the late Mr. Fuller, and the generality of Calvinistic divines, that this particularity does not consist in a limitation of value, for in that respect it is sufficient for the salvation of the whole human race; but in a limitation of intention in the mind of the Saviour as to the persons who should be saved by it, exactly commensurate with the extent of election by the Father, and of regene-

ration by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be conceived that the intention of the Saviour, with respect to the persons who, should be saved by his death, was more extensive than that of the Father in election, and of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. In this point of view, therefore, Christ died only for the elect; he laid down his life for the sheep; he loved the church, and gave himself for it; the children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; for the sake of his people he sanctified himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth; he bare the sin of many; and he prayed not for the world, but for them whom the Father had given him. But in point of value, "the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient for the redemption of the whole world, and for the expiation of all the sins of all and every man in the world. This sufficiency of his sacrifice hath a twofold rise. First: the dignity of the person that did offer, and was offered. Secondly: The greatness of the pain he endured, by which he was able to bear, and did undergo the whole curse of the law and wrath of God due to sin. And this sets forth the innate, real, true worth and value of the bloodshedding of Jesus Christ. This is its own true internal perfection and sufficiency. That it should be *applied* unto any, made a *price* for them, and become beneficial to them, according to the worth that is in it, is external to it, doth not arise from it, but merely depends upon the intention and will of God." (Dr. Owen). If it should be asked, of what use is a universality of value, if there be a speciality of intention? I answer 1. An infinite price is requisite for the redemption of a single sinner. 2. It accords with, and is the ground of, the free invitations of the gospel. "Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." (Matt. xxii. 4), "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say Come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17. and numberless other places.

By this view of the subject we avoid two great difficulties. On the one hand it cannot be justly objected, how can all be

invited to the marriage, when the dinner is prepared only for some? For the dinner which is prepared, and the oxen and the fatlings which are killed, are sufficient for all that are invited. Herein consists the universality (in point of value) of redemption: the speciality of it consists in the intention of the Saviour, which runs parallel and is co-extensive with the Election of the Father, and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Let it not be objected that here is a superabundance of provision; not only bread enough, but bread enough and to spare. If there be, it is a necessary superabundance. Not one sinner could have been redeemed without an infinite ransom, a ransom sufficient in point of value for the redemption of every individual of the human race. Nor is this superabundance greater than that which is to be found in the kingdom of nature, where the rain of heaven falls not only upon the earth, but also upon the sea; and in which, wherever we turn our eyes, there is an exuberance of the divine bounty.—And as this view of the subject shows that there is a sufficiency of provision if men will but come to the marriage; so on the other hand it shows that the will and intention are the same in each of the persons of the blessed Trinity,—that in each there is no intention to save any but those who shall actually be saved. The parts which they take in the work of salvation are co-ordinate and co-extensive. God “hath saved us and called us with a holy calling;” here is effectual vocation by the Holy Spirit. “Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;”—here is election by the Father. “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ:”—here is redemption by the Son. (2 Tim. i. 9.) Various similar passages might be adduced.

It may indeed be objected, that the limitation of intention as much invalidates the doctrine of the freeness of the gospel invitations as the limitation of the value of the death of Christ. It may be said, If the marriage dinner is sufficient for all that are invited, of what avail is it if none can come to it but the elect? This objection is easily answered. What prevents their coming? Is it election? No; if it were

not for election, none would come. Instead of creating the bar, election removes it, so far as the elect are concerned. —Does non-election prevent their coming? No.—What then? I answer, Human depravity. Men *will not* come to Christ that they may have life. Their will is under the tyrannical servitude of sin and Satan. And this is a bar which cannot be removed by any thing but the free and discriminating grace of God. Had it not been, therefore, for election, not an individual of the human race would have been saved.

To assign the origin of human depravity, or of moral evil, is a far more difficult task. “Here are two important truths which are consistent with each other, although we may not be able to discern the link that unites them;—the dependence of the creature upon God, and the accountableness of the creature to God. We subscribe to both, but it is a very difficult thing to reconcile them. If on the one hand we feel our accountableness, we are in danger of forgetting our dependence: or if on the other hand we feel our dependence, we are in danger of forgetting our accountableness. Nor is this difficulty peculiar to any system: were we to abandon Calvinism, and to enter the camp of Arminius, it would still attend us. ‘The prescience of God,’ says Bishop Prettyman, ‘as extending to every instance of human conduct, is a fit object of our belief; but we are utterly incapable of comprehending *how* this prescience consists with the other attributes of the Deity, and with the free agency of man: nor can we conceive how those future contingencies which depend on the determination of the human will, should be certain and infallible; and yet that they are *so*, is fully proved by the accurate accomplishment of prophecies.’ *Prettyman on the Articles.*” Theol. Rev. A. D. 1808. p. 159.

I shall conclude with a few remarks.

1. In the doctrine of the Satisfaction of Christ, or the reconciliation of sinners to God through the death of his Son, we have an evidence of the divine mercy, grace, and goodness, which may justly raise our admiration, and excite our gratitude. Angels could not but wonder when they saw the divine benevolence break forth in this stupendous plan

for the recovery of lost mankind. Much of God is seen in the works of nature and of providence ; every object which our eyes behold declares his power and greatness ; but all other things, many and important as they are, seem, when compared with this, to lose their value, and to sink into insignificance. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

2. In this doctrine we have also an evidence of the love of Christ. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." How glorious, exalted, and honourable will this church be, when all the purposes of his love are accomplished in it ! and how illustriously will it shine to eternity, to the praise and honour of him who redeemed it ! May we be of the happy number, and join the song of the saints in that blessed world, where sin and sorrow, pain and death, shall be felt and feared no more !

Finally : How important it is that we examine well the ground on which we are building our hope of acceptance with God ! We are sinners condemned by his law ; nor can we obtain deliverance but by the cross of Christ. He bore the curse in his own body on the tree, that we might receive forgiveness of sin. Our own works are a sandy foundation on which to build our hope of heaven and happiness. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." But if we are resting for salvation on the solid rock of his mediation, exclusively of human works in point of merit, we shall find it firm, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; inasmuch as we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

CHAP. VII.

ON THE DEITY, PERSONALITY, &c. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

They who deny the deity and atonement of Christ, deny also the deity, personality, and the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit; understanding the passages of Scripture which refer to him, as implying nothing more than divine power or energy. They deny that there is a person in the Godhead, who is properly called the Holy Spirit. In doing which we consider that they give an unscriptural view of the Deity, and lead men to disregard that divine operation by which alone their understandings can be enlightened into the true knowledge of God. They also neutralize the character of the Christian religion, as to the spiritual and eternal advantage they might otherwise receive from it. If God in his mercy pardon our infirmities and weaknesses with respect to the minor parts of Christian doctrine, we have no reason to suppose that we can be acceptable in his sight if we reject from our creed an article which enters into the vitals of the Christian system. Without limiting the power or the mercy of God, or pretending to mark out the boundaries of divine goodness, we hesitate not to declare, that if persons can be saved who deny the personality, deity, and influences of the Holy Spirit, the sacredness of divine truth disappears; it can be but of little consequence either what they believe, or what they deny. This may seem censorious; but while we feel a due regard for all men, we have no idea of sacrificing the leading points of revelation on the altar of false candour.

Some men, while influenced by orthodox principles, have exemplified their effects by being zealous for every good word and work; but when in these very men those principles have been subverted, they have turned aside to vain jangling,

have wandered into regions of speculation, have become indifferent to religious exercises, and have denied the truth of that which, at a former period of their lives, they considered as essential to their present comfort and future happiness. This has been done under pretence of possessing clearer views of divine truth; but in some instances these views have made them mere nullities in religion, except to make others as indifferent to its doctrines and duties as themselves. If this be to possess clear views of divine truth, we would rather be somewhat in the dark, and would prefer to have such views of it as shall constrain us to activity and diligence in the ways of God.

In speaking of the scriptural doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we shall consider his deity, personality, and work of regeneration and sanctification.

1. We will argue the *Deity* of the Holy Spirit. This we shall do, 1. From those Scriptures, in which he is called, or by fair and legitimate inference appears to be God. In Rom. xi. 34, it is asked, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" and 1 Cor ii. 16, it is asked, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" These passages are quotations from Isaiah xl. 13. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? or being his counsellor hath taught him?" Is not the Holy Spirit here represented as the same Being with him "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" That these things are spoken of God none will deny, their performance requiring infinite wisdom and power. If then they were performed by the Holy Spirit, who it is said did not stand in need of a counsellor to teach him how to perform these great works, does it not follow that the Holy Spirit is God?—Again: in Acts xxviii. 25. there is a reference to Isaiah vi. 9. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers." But this Holy Ghost was the Lord, who commissioned the prophet to declare to the Israelites the message contained in that chapter.—Again: in Heb. x. 15, 16, the writer quotes

Jer. xxxi. 31-33. "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, &c." He whom the prophet calls JEHOVAH, is here called the Holy Ghost. Again: in Acts iv. 24, 25, we read, "They lifted up their voice with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" And in Acts i. 16, "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake." The Holy Ghost is therefore the Lord, who spake by the mouth of David.—Also, in 2 Tim. iii. 16, it is said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And in 2 Peter i. 21, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Again: in 1 Cor. iii. 17, "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." And in 1 Cor. vi. 19, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" If Christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and, in being so, are the temples of God, the Holy Ghost must be God.—Again: the lie which Ananias told to the Holy Ghost was told to God; "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God," which is a plain testimony of his deity.

2. From the ascription of Divine perfections to the Holy Spirit.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, in showing the superior efficacy of the blood of Christ to that of bulls and goats in purging the conscience, mentions the sacrifice of Christ as being offered to God "through the eternal Spirit," chapter ix. 14.—*Omnipresence*, also, another attribute of Deity, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" Psalm cxxxix 7. The Holy Spirit, being one of the persons in the Godhead, is every where present; as David abundantly shows in that Psalm.—He is also *omniscient*. All things are known to him; not only those of men, but those of God. "The Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God. The things of God

knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. This is a decisive proof of his Deity. No created being has power of intelligence to understand, nor knowledge sufficient to comprehend, the divine nature; but the Spirit searches the things of God; yea, even the deep things of God; that is, his infinite perfections, and his eternal counsels.—Again: he is called, "The Spirit of *holiness*"—"The Spirit of *grace*"—"The Spirit of *truth*"—"The Spirit of *glory*."—And he is said to be *good*. "Thy Spirit is good." Heb. x. 59; Rom i. 4, John xiv. 17; 1 Peter iv. 14; Psalm cxliii. 10. Eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, holiness, grace, truth, and goodness, are divine attributes; but they are the attributes of the Holy Spirit; and therefore the Holy Spirit is God.

3. From the ascription of divine works to the Holy Spirit: *Creation*. (Gen. i. 2.)—*Inspiration*, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." At the day of Pentecost the apostles were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. He suggested divine truths to their minds, and enabled them to express those truths in various languages. Bestowing the gifts of healing, and of working miracles. (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10.) Other works might be added, but let these suffice.

4. From the form of Christian baptism. "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. xxviii. 20. Baptism is a consecration of the person baptized to the service of the Being in whose name it is administered. But no created being can be so consecrated to another created being without idolatry. This Jesus would not command; therefore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are not any of them created. It would be highly criminal to associate a creature with the Creator upon terms of equality as to divine worship and honours. No man who has the least degree of reverence for God, whatever be his sentiments in reference to the Holy Spirit, would choose to baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of Abraham; or in the name of any other man. Nor would

the substitution of an angel make the case better : our feelings would revolt at the one as well as at the other. It matters not how high the created intelligence may be ; there is still an infinite distance between him and the ever blessed God. But the Holy Ghost is united with the Father and the Son in the administration of this ordinance, which proves their equality with each other. Should it be objected that the Holy Ghost is only an attribute of the Father, it may be replied, that whatever belongs to the Father in reference to his own person is comprehended in that term, as it stands in the form given by Christ ; the very objection amounts to an accusation. The Son of God would not have involved his doctrine in ambiguity, by such an unintelligible mode of expression. But, even allowing it to be so, who could tell which attribute of the Father, in distinction from his other attributes, is to be understood ? We should in that case, therefore, be utterly unable to know what our Lord meant by what he said. His meaning, however, is plain, when we consider that Christianity is the religion of a sinner who relies for salvation from sin and hell on the mercy of the Father, through the person and atonement of the Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and who complies with this ordinance as one who worships the triune God. This view of the passage makes it plain, whilst every other is only darkening counsel by words without knowledge. On the principle of Unitarian interpretation, we must suppose that Jesus Christ commanded his apostles to baptize in the name of God, of a man, and of an influence ; an association which but few people would admit for a moment, were they not driven to it by a system. God ; man ; influence ! Let any reader think seriously upon this statement, and ask himself, whether, on the principle of common sense, there is any probability that Jesus Christ would give such a command ; or whether, even admitting it to be possible, it could be acceptable to the Father.

5. From the apostolic benediction. This is of the same import, and is attended with equal difficulties, on any other mode of interpretation than that which admits of a

plurality of persons in the unity of the divine essence. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." This prayer is as distinctly offered to the Holy Ghost, as to the Father or the Son. But had not the apostle believed their equality with each other, he would not have prayed in this manner. What should we think if any of our ministers, in dismissing their congregations, were to use such an association of words as is contained in this passage, if the Holy Ghost be not a divine person? If, for instance, he should say, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of David be with you. Amen." We should be ready to say, Who is this David, that he should be united with the Father and the Son in terms equally honourable? What man would wish, either in the present life or in that which is to come, to be so united with the blessed God, and with Jesus Christ his Son? The sentiments and feelings of the best men upon the earth would revolt at the thought. Angels would abhor it; every thing, therefore, giving it countenance should be deprecated.

II. We will now endeavour to prove the *personality* of the Holy Spirit. Some men deny this personality, because they imagine that to admit of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, implies a plurality of Gods; for they can have no idea how such plurality can consist with unity. But on this principle we might deny the personality of the Father, as well as that of the Holy Spirit; and yet but few, even of those who deny the personality of the Spirit, would agree to this. They acknowledge that there is one infinite and eternal Spirit, to whom they apply the term person, though they can have no definite idea of that personality. In the Scriptures personal properties are severally ascribed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, with such clearness and force of evidence, that we do not find ourselves able to resist the conclusion, that this plurality is something more than nominal, notwithstanding we are unable to define it. If the sacred writers use such language in speaking of the Father, of the Son, and of the

Holy Ghost, as we use in speaking of various persons, namely, *I*, *Thou*, and *He*; and if such attributes are ascribed to them as by universal consent apply to God; we think it cannot be wrong to speak of them as three persons, while we contend that, having but one essence, they are but one Being. We can more readily admit that our knowledge of spiritual existence in general, and much more of the divine existence, is inadequate to determine any thing with certainty about the essence of God, except its unity, infinity, and perfection, than we can that his word should state any doctrine respecting him improperly. We must either believe that word, or yield our judgment to human reason, the amount of which is, that we are able to understand the manner of the divine existence, better than the language of inspiration has defined it. Thus reason becomes the supreme judge of truth and error, and we in effect say, that it signifies nothing what the sacred writers have said, for we will believe no more than what our reason can comprehend, or of which it can form some definite idea.

To explain away the force of those passages of Scripture which relate to the subject, and to obviate the conclusion drawn from them in favour of the personality of the Holy Ghost, by supposing that they are merely figurative, is an evasion unworthy of an humble inquirer after truth. To have recourse to figurative language where no figure at all is used, is a subterfuge which betrays the weakness of a cause, and the want of argument to support it. By such a method we might explain away the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances of our holy religion, until we had nothing left on which to rest our hope of immortality; a painful suspense would attend all our inquiries; and we should be surrounded with an impenetrable gloom. If what is said in the language of inspiration concerning the Holy Ghost be figurative, why may not what is said of Christ, and of the Father, be figurative? Thus we should exchange the Deity for a figure of speech; and then we might proceed to say that what is said of heaven and hell cannot be real; and that the existence of ourselves, of the world, and of

all that it contains, is also figurative ; a conclusion to which this mode of reasoning is calculated to bring us. It is admitted that in some parts of the sacred writings strongly figurative language is used ; but we maintain, that the subjects treated of in those parts, with the form of expression used in them, sufficiently intimates when this is the case, otherwise those writings could answer no valuable purpose.

The term *person*, in its application to the Spirit of God, is, we apprehend, as remote from a divine attribute, as it is from a separate being. But of these subjects how little do we know ! Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. While revelation is our polar star, we cannot go wrong ; but losing sight of that, we dash against the rocks of speculation, and are in danger of being lost in the abyss of our own folly.

The following remarks, in proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit, are offered to the attention of the reader, hoping that he will seriously consider them.

1. That the Holy Spirit is not a mere attribute of Deity, appears from Peter's address to Ananias, already quoted, (Acts v. 3.) " Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost ? " Nothing but an intelligent being can be lied unto, because no other being can perceive the nature of the declaration in which such lie is contained ? We may speak falsely of God's perfections, natural or moral, and thereby sin against him ; but to suppose that his attributes are capable of being sinned against, would be to deify them, and to make as many Gods as there are attributes in the Deity. Ananias lied unto God, in lying to the Holy Ghost ; if then we speak of God as a being, why may we not so speak of the Holy Ghost ? there is not, that we can see, any impropriety in so doing.

2. On the supposition that the Holy Ghost is only the power of the Father, the language of the sacred oracles is unintelligible. In Acts x. 38, it is said, " God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." This passage on the supposition now opposed, would stand thus :—God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy

power of God, and with power. Again: Paul's preaching at Corinth was not in man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. This would mean, in demonstration of power and of power. There are other passages on which the same remark might be made; but these are sufficient to show the distinction which the Scriptures make between the Holy Spirit and the power of God. It is lamentable that sober thinking men should adopt a system, which leads them into such difficulties. We should bring our sentiments to the word of God in its plain and fair meaning, and not that word to our sentiments. If it contain difficulties, this is nothing more than is found in every thing else: it is the glory of God to conceal a thing; the full development of these subjects is not necessary to our salvation.

3. To say that the Holy Spirit is nothing more than divine power, renders our Saviour's account of blasphemy incomprehensible. Though Christ, as God, possessed every divine perfection, yet the miracles performed by him are to be regarded as performed by the Holy Spirit, unto whom the office of bestowing the gifts of healing, and of the working of miracles, is in the divine economy appointed, (1 Cor. xii. 10.) and whom the Father gave not by measure unto him. It is on this account that the sin of the Jews in ascribing the miracles of Christ to the power of Beelzebub is considered as committed against the Holy Ghost. But on the supposition that we are to understand nothing more by the Holy Ghost than a divine attribute, we can have no idea of what our Lord could mean.

4. The attributes and actions of a person are, by the sacred writers, ascribed to the Holy Ghost. These are so numerous, and the forms in which they are mentioned so various, that it is unnecessary to name them all.—He is said to *speak*; "he shall not speak of himself;"—to *strive*; "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;"—to *intercede*; "The Spirit maketh intercession for us;"—to *search*; "The Spirit searcheth all things;"—to *know*; "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Here we ask, can any creature possibly conceive that knowledge, one essential attribute of God, can with any reason be said to be

power, which is another attribute? Or that power can with any propriety, be said to *know* any thing? Yet all this, and much more, must be supposed, before we can allow that the Holy Ghost is only the power of God. When it is said that God knows all things, we understand the expression, so far as it is necessary to be understood; but who could understand any thing, if it were said that power, which is unintelligent, knows all things? This also would be the case were we to substitute any of the divine attributes for the Holy Spirit; great confusion would thereby be introduced, both into our ideas and language; we must therefore continue to speak of God as he speaks of himself.

III. Having spoken of the Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, we shall now speak of his regenerating and sanctifying operations.

It is truly gratifying to pious minds, that Christians have of late been led deeply to consider their entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit, both for their personal sanctification and comfort, and for the prosperity of the Redeemer's cause. Prayer is now continually offered to God, that the influence of his Spirit may copiously descend upon missionaries, and missionary societies—upon the ministers of our congregations, and upon the means of grace in general—that ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, may be banished from among men, and that earth may resemble heaven. Perhaps there never was a time since the days of the apostles, when these prayers were so numerous as they are at present. May they increase more and more: all true religion found amongst men, since the fall of our first parents, has originated in the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human mind.

While Jesus was on the earth, he frequently gave his disciples intimations of One whom he would send to supply his place, when he should be gone from them. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter."—And, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."—He not only promised that he would pray the Father to send this Comforter, but that he,

as the same Being with the Father, and as exalted to his mediatorial throne, would himself send him. This does not imply that the Spirit is inferior to the Son, any more than the mission of the Son implies his inferiority to the Father. He is one and the same God with the Father, although officially inferior to him. Had not Jesus passed through sufferings to glory, this inestimable blessing would not have been granted to his disciples; but it is now granted to them through his atonement and intercession. In answer to the objections of the Jews against the conduct of the apostles at the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses; therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

The miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit were necessary for the first establishment of the gospel. When these ceased, his ordinary operations were sufficient: these still remain in the church; and the promise of Christ respecting the Holy Spirit is, "He shall abide with you for ever." As the death of Christ will be necessary to the end of the world for the pardon of sin, so also will these operations be necessary to bring sinners to God. The genial beams of the sun, and the refreshing showers of rain, are not more necessary to make the earth bring forth its fruit, than his influences are to make the word preached effectual for the regeneration and sanctification of sinners. The history of the church abounds with proofs of this fact. The minister of the gospel, who has been a good scholar, a masterly reasoner, and an accomplished orator, and who has also been sincerely desirous of the salvation of his hearers, has sometimes laboured comparatively in vain: his excellent and well-arranged discourses have had little or no effect on his hearers; while another of inferior abilities has been the successful instrument of turning many to righteousness. The wilderness will never become a fruitful field, until the Spirit be poured upon it from on high.

Christianity is called the ministration of the Spirit, to distinguish it from mere formality, as well as from the mi-

nistration of the law. The promise of the Holy Spirit is the grand peculiarity of the New Testament, as that of the Messiah was of the Old. Not to maintain the absolute necessity of his influence to renew the mind of man, is to dishonour God, and to injure our own souls. It is well worthy of observation, that where this doctrine has been given up, nothing of importance has been long retained. The distinguishing doctrines of the gospel have been relinquished one after another, in favour of a system dignified by its supporters with the name of "rational;" as though all right reason and rationality were with them, to the exclusion of all others, who yet have reason as well as they, but wish their reason to be in subjection to God's word.

Without the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit, there can be no true religion. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" not of the number of his disciples, nor a partaker of the benefits of his salvation: and a church, without his influences, is a mere body without a soul; a lifeless corpse. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." He may boast of moral virtue, but his religion is the form of godliness without the power. There is a majesty, an authority, and an evidence, in the teaching of the Spirit of God, equally suited to all capacities: when he instructs, the wisest of men renounce their own wisdom, and the weakest are made wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. A single sentence of the Scriptures, applied to the heart by his power, produces more effect than the reading of many folios could do without it. Theoretical knowledge may be obtained by human means; but this has no sanctifying influence on the heart.

God has made the brightest display of his perfections in the cross of Christ; the beauty and loveliness of these perfections are made known in the gospel; and sinners by divine illumination behold them, feel their captivating efficacy, and their transforming power: "they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." By the influence of God's Spirit our midnight

darkness is changed into noon-day ; our passions, naturally full of the poison of sin, are subdued ; and our affections, which before were gross and sensual, are refined and purified. Our carnal minds, which are enmity against God, are brought into subjection to his authority ; his love is shed abroad in our hearts ; and all our powers and faculties are sweetly moved in obedience to his will. When the gospel comes to our hearts, not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, we willingly resign ourselves to God, as those that are raised from the death of sin to a life of holy obedience. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us ; and makes the honour of his divine and mediatorial character, the end of all his operations upon our minds. He teaches us to honour him as we honour the Father, and as being *One* with the Father ; so that if any man professes to have the Spirit of God, and yet dishonours Christ by his doctrine or conduct, we may be sure that he is not what he professes to be. Where this sacred Teacher and Comforter resides, he shows the Saviour to be glorious and precious ; he leads men to depend upon him for the pardon of sin, and for eternal life ; he teaches them to glory in him ; he constrains them to love him, and to devote themselves to his honour and service ; and he bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God. Christians live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit ; he dwells in them, and they are his living temples.

Happy indeed are those persons who are thus divinely instructed ; he who has begun this good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, when they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and sit down on his throne. Let them be careful that they do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom they are sealed to the day of redemption. All their wisdom, strength, and joy are from him ; the only return he requires is, a ready compliance with his suggestions, and a constant watchfulness against every thing of a contrary tendency. To indulge in anger, or selfishness—in sensual gratifications, or in vain conversation—will cause him to withdraw from their souls, and leave them to distressing fears, and to perplexing anxieties. Or he may permit

them to learn their own weakness by such falls as will expose them to sharp corrections. As he condescended to illuminate, and to take the guidance of their souls, it is their duty cheerfully to comply with his dictates, and to avoid what is more curious than useful ; not inquiring to what degree he may be resisted, and still remain with them ; or if he depart, whether he will return again ; but endeavouring that he may dwell in them, as in a quiet and peaceable habitation.

As no duty can be performed in a proper manner without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we should continually implore it, especially when we attend to the services of his house. Our encouragement to do this is great ; the Saviour has said, “ If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall *your heavenly Father* give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him !” That endearing expression, “ *your heavenly Father*,” is sufficient to overcome our doubts and fears, to silence our unbelieving objections, and to impart confidence to our minds. If we desire to partake of spiritual and eternal blessings, it is indispensably necessary that we seek them by prayer and supplication. God promised to deliver his people out of Babylon, and to bring them again to their own land ; that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah should be rebuilt, and replenished with multitudes of inhabitants, like those who in former times had assembled at their solemn feasts ; that he would increase them with men as with a flock ; and that this should be done, not for their sakes, but for his holy name’s sake ;—yet the fulfilment of these promises was to be suspended till they should seek the blessings contained in them. I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Favours were to be granted to them according to the purpose of God ; but the possession and enjoyment of those very favours, must be preceded by, and connected with, their earnest prayers for them. It is also promised that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea ; but we have no reason to expect this to take place until the church of God in general shall have become deeply and permanently impressed with a conviction of the necessity of a divine interposition, and

this conviction shall have been made evident by their giving the Lord no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

If as Christians we desire to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must constantly implore the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. In all our sorrows and troubles, our afflictions and temptations, this Spirit can support our minds, and comfort our hearts, and enable us to rejoice in the prospect of mortal dissolution. Assisted by his influence, we shall fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. May he graciously guide, and safely conduct, both the reader and the writer, through this vale of tears, to the bright, splendid, and glorious mansions in heaven, whereinto neither sin nor sorrow, affliction, pain, nor death, shall ever enter. Amen.

CHAP. VIII.

ON ELECTION.

Election signifies the choosing of some persons or things in preference to others. No one will deny that this doctrine, in one form or other is found in the sacred writings; the connection must determine its meaning.

We shall devote this essay to an enquiry into what those writings teach respecting it, and into the evidences of a person's being of the number of God's elect.

First, let us enquire into the various meanings of the word.

1. Moses said to the Israelites, "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people." (Deut. vii. 6, 7.) This was a national election or choice of that people to privileges not granted to

other nations. It was in this way that God kept the oath which he had sworn to their fathers, and that his purposes towards them were accomplished. The Gentiles also have been blessed, by the Jewish nation being made the depositaries of a treasure which has since enriched the world.

2. Election sometimes signifies the divine appointment of men to official situations. Of Saul, the son of Kish, Samuel said to the Israelites, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" (1 Sam. x. 24.) In this way the apostles of Jesus Christ appear to have held their office. They were all chosen, and, so far as the office was concerned, there was no difference among them. "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John vi. 70.) After Judas had manifested his true character, and it was necessary to fill up his place by the appointment of another to the apostleship; Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias, being selected by the eleven, either of them being, in their opinion, a proper person to succeed him, "They prayed and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." (Acts i. 23, 24.) Nor would I deny, while I maintain that Saul of Tarsus was an eminent instance of election unto everlasting life, that this sense is included in what the Lord said to Ananias respecting him, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." (ix. 15.)

3. The Election which is the subject of the present chapter, signifies God's eternal choice of a part of mankind to be to the praise and glory of his grace through Jesus Christ, while he leaves the rest to fill up the measure of their iniquity, and to complete their own destruction. This, it is acknowledged, is a sublime and difficult subject, and should be treated with reverence and humility.

In contemplating it with reference to the present blindness and the future effectual calling of God's ancient people, the apostle exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33.)

This exclamation, coming from one profoundly skilled in divine truth, strongly censures the conduct of those who arrogantly pretend to reduce the whole of divine revelation to the size of their own intellect, and who absurdly go beyond the doctrines contained therein and their just inferences, to unauthorised and unsupported speculations.

Secondly, Let us consider some arguments in proof of this doctrine. I would however premise, that it has so close a connexion with particular Redemption, and I might add, with effectual calling, that some of the passages of Scripture which have been already cited, will be introduced into the present chapter.

1. It is taught in the Scriptures by express declaration, and also by just inference. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." (Rom. viii. 29-33.) "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Rom. ix. 15.) "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace; I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." (Rom. xi. 1, 2, 5.) "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.)

That these Scriptures speak of the purpose of God with respect to some men in distinction from others, will not, I apprehend, be denied. That spiritual blessings are expressed

in them, as the portion of those whom they thus distinguish, cannot be questioned by those who compare them with other parts of the sacred oracles. This distinction cannot therefore be national, as no whole nation ever did enjoy these blessings. The sheep of Christ, of another fold from that of the Jews, must be Gentile believers, who since that period have in great numbers been added to the church. It is equally clear that the election mentioned in these passages cannot be of persons to an official capacity in the church, it being evident that many are included in it who never filled more than an ordinary station. It follows, therefore, that it must be an individual and personal election to spiritual blessings.

This election proceeds solely on the ground of God's good pleasure, and not on any merit found in these individuals more than in others ; for as all mankind are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, no difference can exist among them, unless a cause out of themselves originate that difference. To imagine that God elected men to eternal happiness, because he foresaw that they would be more worthy of his favour than others, is to imagine what is impossible ; unless it be admitted that worthiness can proceed from what in its own nature is enmity against God. It is true that God cast away the Israelitish nation for their opposition to the kingdom and salvation of the Messiah, by which they had forfeited their privileges, but he did not cast away those whom he foreknew ; a remnant of them were saved according to the election of grace.

2. My second argument is, the Divine determination that a part of the fallen race of Adam shall be saved. This appears both from prophecy, and from the whole tenor of the word of God. But if election be denied, contingency takes its place, and the divine determination becomes a mere contingent determination, which is no determination at all. In proof of this determination on the part of each of the persons of the Trinity, I will cite only a text or two by way of example, from an innumerable multitude. 1. The determination of the Father : " He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isaiah liii. 2.) " For a small moment have I

forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." (Isa. liv. 7, 8.) "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." 2. The determination of the Son. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," (x. 26-28.) "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd, (ver. 16.) 3. The determination of the Holy Spirit, who unites with the Father and the Son in the great work of salvation. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through *sanctification of the Spirit*, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 2.) "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," (ii. 9.) meaning the Holy Spirit, for this is his peculiar work in the economy of redemption. Election (though ascribed more peculiarly to the Father, as the first person in the Trinity) is equally seen in effectual calling, as exercised by the Holy Spirit. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, &c. that no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Cor. i. 26-29.)

3. In the Scriptures salvation is attributed to the grace of God, and not to human works. To suppose that one man turns to God and is saved, while another equally favoured does not, and is therefore lost, is to ascribe the salvation of the one, as well as the destruction of the other, to himself: for, after all the grace bestowed on him who is saved, the

turning point is his own self-determining power, which exalts him to the dignity of being his own Saviour, and nullifies the sovereignty of divine grace. On this supposition salvation is of works; for, although grace must be said to be freely bestowed in the first instance, it is what the party who receives it *does*, that makes it effectual, and not the grace itself. But grace and works, in the salvation of men, are incompatible with each other. "If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." (Rom. xi. 6.) In the salvation of fallen men, grace reigns, with the majesty of an all-powerful monarch, unto eternal life.

This does not destroy the freedom of the human will, if by that be understood that men act according to their own inclination; and true freedom can consist in nothing else. Carnal men freely choose that which is evil; but when God enlightens their minds by his Spirit, to perceive the nature of sin and the beauty of holiness, they as freely choose that which is good; and surely it will not be denied that God can rectify the powers of the human mind without destroying its freedom. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," (Psalm cx. 3). When this power is displayed, the corruptions of the human heart can no longer maintain their force; its influence causes a sinner to yield himself to God as a voluntary offering, and cheerfully to obey his commands. The kingdom of Christ is set up within him; he looks to him as his only Saviour; and he receives him as his prophet, priest, and king. Neither does this view of the doctrine destroy the accountability of man; for if we suppose that, in order to judge men righteously, God *must* give the same grace to all, we make grace a debt, and entirely subvert the freedom of it. But can the Almighty be a debtor to his creatures? Can their deep depravity nullify his claims to their obedience? Or are they the less obliged to do his will, because they have lost their moral ability? Were this to be granted, our duty to God would decrease, in proportion as we rendered ourselves unable to perform it;—a consequence highly dishonorable to God, and de-

tested by every truly good man ! Moreover this would destroy itself ; for if man has a right to grace sufficient for the conquering of his rebellious will, it is matter of justice, and cannot lawfully be withheld from him. But where then is salvation by grace, of which we read so much in the sacred Scriptures ?

4. This doctrine is further proved by the previous character of many who are brought to enjoy its benefits.

It was foretold that the wolf should dwell with the lamb ; that the leopard should lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child should lead them. (*isaiah xi. 6, 9.*) This language sets forth the effects of that ministry which the Messiah came to establish. Through its efficacy, when attended with divine energy, persons of peculiarly depraved dispositions were to become harmless, peaceable, benevolent, and affectionate ; their change was to be as evident and surprising, as if beasts of the most savage and ferocious nature should become as gentle and kind as the tamest of animals. It was thus in the beginning of the gospel dispensation. Grace subdued the loftiest minds, softened the hardest hearts, and brought the most unruly spirits into subjection to divine authority. Zaccheus the publican, Saul of Tarsus, the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Thessalonians, were all evidences of this fact ; and although it is not necessarily thus, many of a different character from them having been brought to a participation of spiritual blessings ; yet it cannot be denied that there have been instances of the former kind in every age, sufficiently numerous to form a ground of argument against sinners being elected to eternal life in consequence of any foreseen goodness in themselves. Had any person proposed such a sentiment to the apostle Paul, he would have repelled it as highly derogatory to divine grace. His opposition to it would have been in proportion to the sense he had of his own unworthiness. And we appeal to the consciences of all who have tasted and handled the word of life, and ask them whether they were naturally of a more pliable temper, and of a better disposition than many of

those who still reject the gospel ; whether, had it pleased God to work in the latter, *they* would not have been as pious as themselves? Whether they can honestly ascribe their salvation, even in the smallest degree, to their own works? We have no doubt that all who enjoy the life of real religion, will attribute the renewal of their heart to God, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." (Psalm cxv. 1.) If this be true, why should it be thought that something in us, call it by what name we may, is necessary to give efficacy to divine grace? We have no doubt that the conviction of utter unworthiness in the sight of God is so deeply felt by many good men, that, instead of supposing they have done any thing which has tended to bring them into a state of salvation, they look upon themselves as the chief of sinners, and believe that they may justly be considered as "patterns of mercy to those who may hereafter believe on Jesus Christ to life everlasting."

Finally, Divine providence furnishes another proof of it. At the present period there are parts of the world where the gospel is not preached, while other parts of it have for many years been favoured with this inestimable blessing ; yet no reason can be assigned for this, but what is resolvable into divine providence, which extends to and comprehends all beings and all things in every part of the creation. The various ranks of men, and the situations they occupy in society, flow from the fiat of the Almighty. The condition and circumstances of one man are different from those of another ; one has a greater portion of intellect than another ; "The rich and the poor meet together ; the Lord is the maker of them all." He is not simply their Creator, but their Maker as rich and poor : his providence over-rules all their affairs. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God ; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." (Deut. viii. 18.) "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south ; God is the judge ; he putteth down one and setteth up another." (Psalm lxxv. 5, 6.) He controls the evil actions of men,

and makes them subservient to his own purposes. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. i. 20.) He numbers the hairs of our heads, and feeds the young ravens when they cry. The education and connexions of men do more or less as to the formation of their characters, which character not only affects their present circumstances, but their condition in another world. The most minute affair has, under the direction of providence, given a turn to the pursuits of individuals, the consequences of which have extended, not only through their own lives, but also to their posterity.

And who can deny that every link of the chain of providence, is inseparably connected with the whole; and if so, what reason can be assigned that the whole is not governed by the Lord?—It is evident that what he does by his own actual operation, and what he suffers others to do, though contrary to his commands, fall in with the economy of his providence, and fulfil his decrees. The fall of Adam, and of his posterity in him; the selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites, and his going down into Egypt; the famine in the land of Canaan, which occasioned Elimelech and his wife Naomi to go into the land of Moab; the captivity of the Israelites in Babylon, with many other events; as well as the occurrences of our own lives, have fulfilled the purposes of Jehovah. And what God does in time, he determined to do from eternity: there can be no afterthought with him. If this view of providence be agreeable to the word of God, it so fully proves the doctrine of election, that, on this occasion, no further argument is necessary.

Thirdly, Having stated what the Scriptures teach respecting this doctrine, I shall briefly consider the scriptural evidences of being of the happy number. The sacred writers always mention election in connexion with its practical effects; they never state it in an unguarded manner, nor leave their readers to suppose that they are of this number, unless they are holy. *They* have described the elect by their principles and characters; and this is the only way in which *we* can distinguish them from others.

1. Love to God is the first evidence which we shall mention of true religion; and it is observable, that it is connected with being "called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.) We can have no proof of being thus called, except we experience this love; the evidence of the one, will be in proportion to the strength of the other. The love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of his people, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them; it is the spring of action and the motive to obedience. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (1 John v. 3. John xiv. 21.) That obedience to God which springs from love, will be prompt, universal, and sincere; and may be considered as an evidence of our election to eternal life.

2. Christians are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. (Rom. viii. 29.) They, therefore, who profess to be of the number of the elect, should be governed by the same principles; should have the same end in view; and should regulate their outward conduct agreeably to his. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) The apostle Paul wished to attain to this state of mind, when he said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. iii. 10.) It is not indeed supposed that we shall be holy, as Christ was holy, while we continue in this world; but we are required to be *imitators* of God as dear children; and though we shall not attain to perfection in this life, we must be continually endeavouring after it; and thus we shall evidence a state of mind in unison with the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, and have a solid and well-grounded hope of our election.

3. In the divine economy, means are suited to ends, and are necessary for their accomplishment. If persons ima-

gine that they are of the number of the elect while they live in sin, they deceive themselves; holiness is as necessary to happiness, and as certainly connected with it, as though it were its procuring cause; there can be no possession of the one without the other; God gives grace, that he may give glory. The purposes of the Almighty respecting the election of his people do not set aside his revealed will; nor can they be any guide for human conduct. In Paul's dangerous voyage to Rome, an angel of God appeared to him; assured him that he must be brought before Cæsar, and that God had given him all the souls that were with him in the ship; and he believed that it should be even as it was told him. The end therefore was absolutely decreed, yet the means must be used; when the mariners would have made their escape, Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. (Acts xxviii.) God saves his people by means of his own devising. To attempt therefore to separate between the end decreed and the appointed means, is to act in opposition to his will; while to keep the end always in view, and to aim at its completion, by diligently obeying his commands, is to co-operate with him. Thus we shall add to our faith, virtue, or fortitude; to fortitude, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity, or love. These holy dispositions, and the effects of them upon our conduct, will be united, and blended together in perfect harmony, each giving strength and beauty to the whole. Thus we shall exhibit the Christian religion in comely proportion, shine as lights in a benighted world, and have a satisfactory evidence that we are chosen of God to eternal salvation.

4. Gratitude to God is a proof of his work in our souls, and by consequence, of our election. The man who considers himself as rescued from the very borders of destruction, through the interposition of divine mercy, must at times feel his heart dissolved with gratitude for so great a

favour. It will fill his soul with wonder and love, to think that when he was an enemy to all that is holy, he should be reconciled to God through the life and death of his dear Son. This was the experience of the apostle Paul. He had been a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious; his very breath was threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus; but when his heart was changed by divine grace, recollecting what God had wrought in him, he exclaimed, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *things* in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." (Eph. i. 3, 4.) Insensibility to divine favours is awfully characteristic of those who are dead in sins; but when quickened by divine grace, a sense of obligation to the Author of our mercies, will produce in us adoring praises; we shall then honour the Son as we honour the Father, and, with the blessed in heaven, ascribe honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

They who possess these evidences of the work of God in them, may be assured of their election. They may be in heaviness through manifold trials, but all things shall work together for their good; and in general, while they obey the divine will, they shall be able to adopt the apostle's triumphant language, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) I shall conclude with a few reflections.

Reflection 1.—The chief end that God had in view in the election of his people, was his own glory; that he might display the perfections of his nature in their salvation, through the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, and thereby raise an eternal monument to the praise of the glory

of his grace. "He predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. i. 5, 6.)

Reflection 2.—The promises of God to sinners in general, are a sufficient ground of encouragement to all who desire to seek him; none need despair of finding mercy, who look to God through Jesus Christ. "He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.) For persons to say, "If I am elected I shall be saved; but if not, I shall be lost; it can therefore be of no use for me to attempt to seek the Lord; all will be as he has ordered it from eternity"—discovers a spirit of rebellion. Let such persons remember, that they will not be condemned because they were not elected; but that, if they die in sin, they will be condemned because of their unbelief, and the aversion of their hearts to God. On the other hand, the man who imagines that he is elected, and shall therefore be saved, though he indulges in sin, will find himself awfully deceived. To suppose that the substitution of Christ instead of his people has set them at liberty from moral obligation, is contrary both to the law and the gospel.

Reflection 3.—The scriptural doctrine of election is perfectly consistent with exhortations and admonitions to sinners to repent of their sins, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The sacred writers, who teach that doctrine, exhort and admonish men to repentance and faith; they also require them to obey the divine commands, notwithstanding their moral inability. Did the gospel invite men to believe their *individual* and *personal* election, the case would be different; but it does not; it is glad tidings of good things to sinners of mankind; its declarations of pardon, peace, and full salvation, to all who believe in Jesus Christ, are a complete warrant for our faith in him; but our personal election must be known in the same manner as Paul knew the election of the Thessalonians; he argued it from their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

(1 Thess. i. 3, 4.) We must reason from the effects to the cause; and the more evident it is, either to ourselves or to others, that we are of the number of God's elect, the more humble it will make us before him; it will also influence us to be active and diligent in his ways, that we may glorify him in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE EVIDENCES OF PERSONAL RELIGION.

The subject which now claims our attention is of no small moment. It is what the Holy Scriptures, whose truth we have been considering, declare concerning our future state of existence as individuals. It is whether we shall be admitted into the presence of that Being whose perfections we have been contemplating; or whether he will say unto us, Depart, ye cursed. It is whether the Saviour is *our* Saviour; whether *we* have been given unto him by his Father; and whether *our* names are written in the book of life.

Through the mercy of God, there are some persons who, after the termination of the present state of existence, will be put into the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away—an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, in that blessed region where there is no more death; but where the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the midst of them, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be written on their foreheads; where God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things will have passed away.

But who are they ? There will then be only two classes, the righteous and the wicked. It is the righteous, and the righteous only, who will enter into this felicity. There will in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life. At the last day, the awful, solemn day of judgment, when the righteous shall be welcomed by the Saviour into the kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world, the Judge will say to those who have lived and died without being real Christians, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

As the happiness of those who shall dwell for ever with God will exceed all description, so also will the misery of the wicked. The Scriptures use the strongest terms to convey ideas of these different states ; yet it is impossible for us to form correct views, either of eternal happiness, or of eternal perdition.

The writer and the reader of these lines will either be among the blessed or among the cursed ; " for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Let us therefore inquire with a solicitude becoming our circumstances, and with an impartiality suited to the importance of the inquiry, what is likely to be our lot at that great and decisive day. Let us examine our characters and our prospects, whether, according to our present state, we shall ascend to heaven to dwell with God, and Christ, and holy angels, and saints ; or whether we shall descend to the abodes of misery, to dwell with devils and lost souls for ever and ever.

This subject deserves the most serious investigation, *now* while opportunity lasts, before death shall have fixed our eternal state. That we may do this in a proper manner, let us discharge from our minds all sublunary things, retire from the noise and bustle of life, and commune with God and with our own heart. To incline us to this important

duty, we should remember how uncertain life is, that we are every moment liable to be summoned out of time into eternity, and that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither we are going.

Ever blessed God, by whose Holy Spirit the minds of men are enlightened to understand and to judge of spiritual and eternal subjects, do thou, of thine infinite mercy and goodness, enlighten my mind, that I may judge aright of those things which constitute the Christian character, and happily experience what is the hope of thy calling, and what the riches of the glory of thine inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of thy power toward them that believe, according to the working of thy mighty power. Amen.

I. True penitents are deeply humbled under a sense of the evil nature of sin, and especially of their own transgression. None but persons of this description will value a Saviour. To others he has no charms; but by them his mercy and grace are highly prized. The prophet Jeremiah says, that "it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord our God." (Jer. ii. 19.) A proper sense of this lies at the foundation of all personal religion. None but they who understand the purity of the moral law, and the rectitude which it requires; who believe that God is an infinitely holy Being, and that he cannot look upon sin but with detestation, will form just ideas of its awful nature, or of its dangerous consequences. Men uninstructed by the Spirit of God are apt to suppose, that sin is only complying with passions which the Almighty has implanted in us, not considering that, in our primeval state, those passions were under the control of reason, and in subjection to divine authority. At the utmost these men consider sin as a venial offence, which God will not severely punish; and hence they expect to have peace, though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. Notwithstanding God has declared that he will punish the finally impenitent with everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power, still they go on in sin, and defer the thoughts of death as though he had not so threatened. Notwith-

standing we read that the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day ; that on account of sin Adam was turned out of Paradise ; that the old world was drowned with water ; that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire ; that Pharaoh and his host sunk like lead in the mighty waters ; that the Son of God died on the cross a sacrifice for sin, the just for the unjust ; and that sinners will be driven away in their wickedness ; yet men, notwithstanding these and other judgments and threatenings recorded in the word of God, indulge the expectation of escaping with impunity. What awful insensibility ! The God of this world blinds their minds, and, unless divine grace prevent, they will go on till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and have completed their eternal ruin.

The first step towards a recovery from this dreadful condition, is a sense of the evil and desert of sin. This acquaintance is not superficial. Sin appears to them as it really is, exceedingly offensive to God. Superficial convictions of the evil of sin will be but of little use. It is not uncommon for men, after having been exercised with these, to proceed in rebellion against God with greater force than before. As water, the course of which has been interrupted for a time, when that interruption is removed, rushes forward with greater rapidity than before ; so carnal men, having been stopped in their course of sin by fearful apprehensions of its consequences, are frequently more wicked, when these apprehensions are removed, than they were previously to their taking place. In some instances, where convictions of sin have seemed to produce the most alarming apprehensions, they have not terminated in sound conversion. Many persons in affliction, while death has appeared unavoidable, have lamented their sinful practices, and have apparently prayed for pardon with the greatest earnestness, promising, if God would spare their lives, that they would live differently from what they had done. But when the affliction has been removed, and they have come again into

life, even as though they had almost arisen from the dead, they have returned to their old course of sin. The corruptions of their evil hearts have gained strength faster than their bodies have recovered health. They were frightened at the thought of everlasting burnings, but not humbled for sin by any work of the Spirit of God within them.

When King Saul saw that David had saved his life although he could have taken it away, knowing that he had sinned both against David and against God, he was for a time overcome with a sense of his evil conduct, and exclaimed, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" Yea, he even "lifted up his voice and wept, and said unto David, Thou art more righteous than I." These feelings however were only transient; he afterwards sinned with a greater degree of obduracy.

Hast thou, O my soul, had a deep and permanent conviction of the evil of sin, and been humbled as thou oughtest to be on account of it? Hast thou considered its nature in reference to God and to thyself, and sought and found the remedy which he has graciously provided for so dreadful a disease?

II. The Scriptures teach that those who are sensible of the evil of sin feel godly sorrow on account of it. This "worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Between these two kinds of sorrow there is a great difference, not only in their nature, but in their origin and consequences. The latter is occasioned by what relates to this world, and proceeds on principles of carnal reason, increasing or abating as we are prosperous or adverse. Sometimes the sorrow of the world terminates in crimes the most awful, and at other times in a more than usual degree of unconcern about futurity. In some instances it leads to infidelity, and to the despising of all that is good, but never softens the heart, nor humbles the soul before God.

Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" yet we do not find that he ever repented in a proper manner. Judas, after betraying his Master, felt remorse of conscience, and went out and hanged himself. When Bel-

shazzar saw the fingers of a man's hand write upon the wall of his palace, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Remorse of conscience turned him pale ; his whole frame was disordered ; no bodily pain or anguish can give an adequate idea of his inward agony ; yet all this could not change his heart—could not create his soul anew—something more was necessary to bring him to a godly sorrow for sin.

This sorrow originates in a different way, and manifests itself by different effects. It is sorrow produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Sorrow *about* sin and eternal things will be of no use, unless it produceth repentance ; and even repentance itself may be counterfeit or spurious, and so not be unto salvation. Unless we are filled with deep humility before God on account of its deformity in his sight ; unless we have a holy dread lest we be left to commit it, and possess faith in the righteousness and atonement of Christ, with a new heart and a new life, and are delivered from the power of sin ; we should not conclude that we are the subjects of evangelical repentance.

The publican stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The woman, whose cause Christ pleaded against the accusations of the pharisee, stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. These actions were expressive of a deep sense of the evil of her former conduct, of her view of the value of the Saviour, of her love to him, and of her desire to show every possible mark of that love. Her sins which were many were forgiven her, and she was filled with affection to him who graciously forgave them.

It is probable, that some persons who make a great profession of religion, are deceived in their views of repentance. They *once* experienced much fear of the consequences of sin, were apprehensive of eternal perdition, and were very desirous of escaping from it ; and nothing could relieve

them from this fear till they found ease in a profession of religion. But their hearts were never broken for sin by looking to the Saviour, nor did they ever repent unto salvation. Notwithstanding all their fears and their release from them, they still remained at a distance from God. Their passions were affected, their imaginations were warmed in the services of devotion, and they felt pleasure in the hope of going to heaven ; but they never felt a contrite and humble spirit, nor was the love of God shed abroad in their hearts.

In speaking of sorrow for sin, it must not be forgotten that it does not exclusively regard our own sins, but it extends also to the sins of others. As to be concerned only about our own salvation, and to have little or no regard for the salvation of mankind, is not the spirit of the gospel; so neither is that true repentance, which fixes our attention on our own guilt alone, and leaves us indifferent to that of other men.

We cannot indeed but be most affected by our own sins, because we know most of them ; but if we understand the malignity of sin, and the evil and danger it has brought upon the human race, we cannot be unaffected by the state of mankind in general. Sin will be hateful to us because of its own deformity ; and we shall feel for the dishonour it does to God, and shall possess a great desire for the eternal felicity of others, as well as for that of our own souls.

True religion is not selfish ; it requires that we consider mankind as our brethren, love them as ourselves, and earnestly endeavour to promote their best interests. Consequently whatever exposes them to most imminent danger must fill our minds with sorrow on their account.

David was concerned even unto tears because of the iniquities of mankind : " Rivers of waters," saith he, " run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law." " I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word." (Psalm cxix. 136. 158.) The prophet Jeremiah says, " Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!" But why did he so earnestly desire this ? was it that he might bitterly lament over his own sins?

Doubtless he had often done this ; but at this time he was deeply concerned for the sins of others ; for he proceeds to say, " that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people ;" their crimes against God were the cause of which this slaughter was the effect ; for he goes on to inform us that they were an adulterous, treacherous, lying people ; a people that were not valiant for the truth on the earth, but who proceeded from evil to evil. (chap. ix. 1-3.) The apostle Paul likewise feelingly lamented the sinful and dangerous condition of the Jews. " I have great heaviness (says he), and continual sorrow in my heart ; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He had received many indignities from them ; yet, notwithstanding these, their unbelief and consequent rejection of God excited great sorrow. His heart's desire and prayer to God for them was, that they might be saved. In this he imitated his Lord and Master, who wept over the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and prayed for his very murderers. This state of mind, which is essential to true repentance, is acceptable in the sight of God.

In the vision of Ezekiel, when the men that had charge over Jerusalem were sent forth "to slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women ;" an exception was made in favour of those who sighed and cried for all the abominations that were committed in that devoted city.

The souls of holy men are vexed from day to day with seeing and hearing the wicked works and words of ungodly men. Their prayers, examples, and endeavours are opposed to this wide-spreading torrent of impiety ; and when these fail to stop its progress, they mourn in secret before God.

Insensibility to the eternal condition of our fellow-sinners, or only to spend a few thoughts upon this subject when it occasionally comes before us, argues a state of mind contrary to the love required by the law of God, and to the mercy of the gospel ; but the more we can appeal to the heart-searching Judge through the testimony of his Spirit in our consciences, that we do sincerely pity, pray for, and are willing to

endure privations and difficulties to accomplish the salvation of our fellow-men, the more evident it is that he has effectually wrought within us.

It may be doubted whether this feature of true religion is so prominent as it ought to be in the professors of the present day. There are some of them in whom it is an active principle, but most of us are apt to think too lightly even of our own sins; and as to those of others, we scarcely ever find them a cause of sorrow to our minds. We may sometimes feel a little concerned for our near relations and friends, and grieve on their account; but in general we are nearly, if not altogether, unmindful of the spiritual and everlasting welfare of mankind at large. Even this grief for the souls of our friends may originate in the ties of relationship, and not spring from love to God.

But if this be the utmost of our charity towards men, of our regard for the honour of God, and of our desire for the extirpation of moral evil from the earth, it may be doubted whether we are not entirely destitute of real religion. This is a most dangerous condition; the bare possibility, therefore, of being in it should awaken anxious enquiry into our experience of the work of God in our hearts. We should beg of him to grant us his Holy Spirit, that we may have proper views of our own state, and that he would not suffer us to be deceived in a point of the utmost importance; but that, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, our repentance for our own sins may be genuine, our sorrow for the sins of others may be what the Scripture requires of us, our obedience to the whole gospel the fruit of holy love, and our whole souls devoted to his glory. Thus we shall be Christians in reality, and shall enjoy a good hope of dwelling with God for ever; we shall possess the principle of eternal life, and be one with Christ. Afflictions and trials will be productive of our real good; nor will it be in the power of either men or devils to hurt us; for God, even our own God, shall bless us.

III. Another evidence of real religion is, Faith in Jesus Christ. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."—We are saved by grace "through faith." Salvation is by

faith, that it might be by grace. "He that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. True faith in Christ leads men to renounce all other grounds of acceptance with God, but his obedience and sufferings, his resurrection and his intercession. By it we are united to him, as the branch is united to the vine, and derive life and nourishment from him. By it also we are brought into union with his church, and have an interest in all spiritual blessings and privileges. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." We may understand the duties of the Christian, and yet not be Christians ; we may even be capable of explaining those duties to the comfort and edification of others, and yet not be edified or comforted by them ourselves.—It is not enough, however, that we have a knowledge of Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, or that we consider him as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament ; our faith in him must be operative ; it must work by love, and purify the heart, or it will do us no real good. At the last day many will say unto Christ, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? to whom he will say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity !"

It is lamentable to observe what numerous and what awful mistakes are made respecting faith. Some people imagine that all persons born of Christian parents, and brought up in a Christian country, are believers in Christ, and will certainly be saved, without taking into the account the necessity of being turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. They never think of that death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, which the moral condition of mankind renders absolutely necessary unto eternal salvation.

Faith in Christ applies the declarations of Scripture to the conscience. It says to the sinner, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man." It fixes guilt upon him, and fills his soul with a deep sense of its awful malignity, and convinces

him that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse from its pollution. Persons who have felt the power of a lively faith in the Son of God, and have experienced the healing efficacy of his blood, know that it purges from dead works, imparts peace, and affords confidence in approaching the throne of grace; and that it speaks better things than the blood of Abel, which cried for vengeance, whilst this speaks pardon to the wretched and undone, by satisfying the justice of God, and declaring his righteousness in the remission of sin, that he may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Faith in Christ is always of the same nature, though it may exist in vastly different degrees. It is strong or weak, as we perceive the evidence of the truth on which it rests. If we fully believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, we shall be strong in faith, and give glory to him; but if that testimony be only imperfectly believed, our faith will be weak, and our minds filled with doubt and hesitation respecting the safety of our state, the willingness of Christ to save us, and the faithfulness of God to his promises.

In estimating our character, we should be very particular as to the spiritual nature of our faith. Faith is the root from which the tree of righteousness grows; it is the source of all truly religious exercises; it forms a leading feature of Christianity; it supports the minds of its possessors under all the trials of life, and it sweetens and brightens their prospect beyond the grave.

Faith must show itself by a sincere and universal obedience to God. If we have only a dead, or unoperative faith, we are in a worse condition than those who make no pretensions to it; for as the human body, when destitute of the living principle, soon becomes offensive to us; so that faith which produceth not obedience is offensive in the sight of God. As this blessing is a divine gift, we should pray that the Holy Spirit may lead us to see our ruined condition as sinners, and bestow upon us that divine influence which will enable us to discern the excellency of Christ as the Saviour, and to believe in him unto salvation.

IV. True religion in the soul discovers itself by delight

in holy exercises, and leads the man who possesses it to apply himself directly to them. It was said of Saul of Tarsus, immediately after his conversion, "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer is the continual exercise and delight of those persons who are truly brought to God. They may have prayed in a formal manner for many years, and with great exactness, but they never prayed in reality until now; never earnestly implored that mercy without which their sins cannot be forgiven. Prayer to God is so evident a mark of Christianity, that whoever lives without it ought not to suppose that he is a Christian. Humble, earnest, fervent prayer to God is the very breath of the new-born soul; the very element in which it lives. As soon might a fish live in the air, or a bird in the water, as a soul born of God live without prayer. Christians find it good to draw nigh to God; it lightens their burdens, and scatters their doubts; it overcomes their fears, and dispels their darkness; it brings light, joy, and peace to their minds; and it strengthens them for their warfare with sin, raises them above the difficulties of life, and elevates their minds to heaven and to God. Dost thou, my soul, delight in prayer? Does this mark of the Christian belong to thee? Art thou frequently before God, confessing thy sins, and imploring his full and free forgiveness?

Another exercise in which good men delight, is to read and meditate upon the word of God. They read it now with different views and feelings from what they did when they were in the darkness of sin and unbelief. The eyes of their minds being enlightened, they perceive great beauty in the sacred writings, and wonder why they could not discern that beauty before. It is as if scales had fallen from their eyes; the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. That which had been to them as a sealed book, of which they understood nothing in a spiritual point of view, now appears easy to be understood. When they peruse its sacred pages, they often see new beauties, and taste fresh delight. The sacred volume appears quite new to them; its doctrines, heavenly and divine; its precepts, just and good; and its promises, great and precious, and exactly suited to

their circumstances. All its contents are adapted to instruct and comfort their minds, to make them wise unto salvation, and to prepare them for every good word and work. It is now better to them than thousands of gold and silver. They are taught by it the character, the excellency, and the value of Jesus Christ; and the vanity of the world, the shortness of life, and the necessity of being prepared to die.

Is this thy experience, my soul? Art thou fond of reading the word of God, and of meditating upon its sacred contents? Dost thou perceive its beauties, and see its suitableness to thy state? Be impartial with thyself. Thou must soon die.

To attend upon the ministry of the gospel is also considered by real Christians as a great privilege. In them is fulfilled the prophetic declaration, "Many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." They hang upon the lips of the preacher; and while he declares the glad tidings of salvation, the doctrine drops as the rain, and distils as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass. Being now numbered with the sheep of Christ, they know his voice, and follow him; and a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.

As soon might the prodigal son, after he came to himself, have been satisfied with the husks that the swine did eat, as *they* can now be satisfied with that preaching which excludes Christ and his cross as the way of salvation. Such is their love for this doctrine, that if it be not preached in the village or town where they live, they will travel to the place where it is preached, and account it a mercy that they can visit the house of God, and enjoy the ordinances of the gospel, though it be attended with bodily fatigue. The walks of many on the morning of the day that has called them to these services have been truly pleasant. Every object of creation has seemed to them to assume new charms, and the whole face of nature to wear new beauty; they have gone with delightful steps to the courts of the

Most High, and by the way have spoken of the might of his terrible acts, and declared his greatness; they have abundantly uttered the memory of his great goodness, and have sung of his righteousness; they have spoken of the glory of his kingdom, and talked of his power. And when they have entered the house of God, they have uttered the prayer, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces; for my brethren and my companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." Is this thy experience, O my soul? hast thou found pleasure in going to this house; canst thou say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth?" If thou find no pleasure in the worship of God now, how wilt thou delight in it to eternity? It is not enough that thou go to his house; many do that who have no real delight in its services. Thou must, when there, worship God who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth.

V. Christianity manifests itself by *gratitude*. We possess many mercies both temporal and spiritual. These should excite in us thankfulness to the Giver of them. Gratitude is characteristic of God's people; it is impossible they should be destitute of it. Ingratitude is a great sin, even towards men; how much more must it be so towards God. They who enjoy the influence of his distinguishing grace, are at times overcome with a sense of their obligations to him, and wish to render unto him according to all his benefits conferred upon them. His mercy in calling them out of darkness into his marvellous light, fills their hearts with his praises. Sooner could they forget all other things than forget his grace in adopting them into his family, and in making them heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They often exclaim with David, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" When they consider the condition of those who still live in sin, especially of those with whom they used to associate in iniquity, and whom, it may be, they led forward in that iniquity, their souls are humbled; they wonder at the kindness and grace bestowed upon them. Their inquiry is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits

towards me?" They resolve to give themselves first unto the Lord, and then unto his people according to his will; and, having been baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, they commemorate his love who died on the cross to redeem them.

When they who profess faith in Christ can be content without thus gratefully dedicating themselves to him, the omission raises a doubt of their sincerity; there is reason to suspect that some undiscovered sin is at the bottom of this conduct. God will accept of nothing as a substitute for obedience; "to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Neglect of a sincere, persevering, and universal obedience to the commands of God, so far as we understand them, certainly evidences a criminal state of mind, and exposes us to his displeasure. Whereas, if we are influenced by gratitude to do his will, we shall enjoy a sense of his favour, and shall be prepared to dwell with him for ever. Has gratitude to God, O my soul, ever warmed and animated thee in the services of devotion? Has his distinguishing grace led thee to adore him, to walk in all his ordinances and statutes, yielding thyself to him as one that is alive from the dead, and the members of thy body as instruments of righteousness unto holiness? Dost thou enter into the very spirit of Paul's language, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ?" If thou refusest to give an answer to these questions, and turnest thy attention to other things, it proves that thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Let these thoughts come home to thy conscience. Be faithful to thyself. The day of death, the day of judgment, can be at no great distance; do not therefore neglect thy future state.

VI. Amongst the constituent parts of religion in the souls of men is Charity, or holy Love. This is so essential to it, that after the apostle Paul had given a most excellent description of its nature, he concluded by saying, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." It is the greatest, because it is the

image of God in the soul. "God is love." By faith, we receive Christ as our Saviour; by hope, we expect a future good; but by love, we resemble God, and by it alone are qualified to be one with him. Faith may be considered as the foundation of good works; hope rears the superstructure; but love finishes and crowns the whole. Faith and hope relate only to God and to ourselves, but love embraces the whole world. Faith and hope, too, are temporary; but love will never terminate: when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope, as the expectation of future blessedness, shall be unnecessary, love will make a great part of the harmony and happiness of heaven. This grace is holy in its origin, and its effects; it is one of those operations of the mind which prove that it is influenced by the Spirit of God. There is nothing like it amongst our natural passions. If we may be said to have any love before we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, it is far from being holy. Self-gratification is the ruling principle in every carnal heart. This can scarcely be called love, it being rather a criminal indulgence of our evil propensities. If we really loved ourselves, we should act consistently with our best interests; but self-gratification leads to conduct directly opposed to those interests, and often plunges men into the greatest sins. Holy love may be described as love to moral excellency. God being altogether holy, or possessed of infinite moral beauties, it is charmed with those beauties, so far as the mind can understand them; it is fixed upon him as the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings. Jesus Christ being one with the Father, holy love delights in him. The Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, and partaking with them of divine perfections, is also an object of its admiration.

To contemplate the attributes of the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Scriptures, increases this holy love. Especially when we consider, that the Father gave his Son to redeem us; that the Son gave himself to death that he might save us from sin and hell; and that the Holy Spirit, by his influence upon our minds, makes us fit for the enjoyment of heaven. Love, as a part of religion, is more easily and certainly discovered

both to ourselves and to others than either faith or hope. When we cannot prove our religion with satisfaction in any other way, we may prove it by love. The affections of the mind being fixed upon holy objects, its disapprobation or hatred will be fixed upon what is unholy; and the exercise of it cannot be concealed from our knowledge. When we doubt whether we have true faith in God, or hope in his mercy, we may nevertheless be assured that we hate sin, and love that which is holy. In the most dark and disconsolate moments, Christians experience an esteem for good men; and the declaration, "We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," gives them hope. Christian love does not confine itself to a party or section of the church of Christ, but highly esteems all who evidence themselves to be his disciples. God is its supreme object; them who nearest resemble him it will love most, of what party soever they may be. This love may perhaps admit of a preference for those who think as we do on the doctrines and precepts of Christ; but this similarity of sentiment cannot atone for a want of holiness.

Zeal for the increase of a party is a very different thing from holy love. Bigotry and pride may produce the one, but the other originates with God. Some professors of religion would nearly dispense with holiness, for an agreement in the articles of faith; but though we should agree in opinion with angels, yet without love we are nothing.

Let me ask myself therefore whether I am the subject of this divine grace. Do I love God and Christ, the Holy Spirit and holy exercises? Religion is holy, and so is heaven. All its inhabitants are holy. I must be made meet for that place before I can go thither. Indeed, it may be considered as a state rather than as a place; for it could afford us no happiness unless we be holy. But this is so important a part of personal religion, that I intend to treat of it more at large in the following chapter.

VII. Another part of real religion is submission and resignation to the will of God. These are not the same thing, though very similar. The first is a yielding ourselves to what is past or present because it is the will of God; the

second is a yielding ourselves to what he may bring upon us at a future period.

Disquietude on account of what is past, or of what is present, and fearful apprehensions of what may come in future, are equally offensive to God. We do not, however, suppose that submission and resignation are possessed by Christians in a perfect degree in this imperfect state; the best of men have manifested the contrary: nevertheless, real Christians struggle against those workings of their own minds that oppose the will of God. Assured that he is righteous in all his ways, and that his wisdom is infinite, they desire to comply with his will in Christ Jesus concerning them. If we submit to what is past or present, because it is the will of God; we shall, on the same principle, resign ourselves to what may take place in future. But if the consideration of its being his will be not sufficient to induce us to do this, nothing else can. This spirit, though rarely possessed, does not indeed go the whole length of Christian feeling. We are not only required to submit and resign ourselves to God under all his dispensations, but even to rejoice in tribulation; to kiss the rod of affliction, and to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. The trying of our faith worketh patience, and patience should have its perfect work. The utmost confidence should be placed in the power, wisdom, goodness, and mercy of God. He knows the whole of human affairs, the connection of one event with another, the effect of their single, or of their united operation, and can manage them all agreeably to his own pleasure, making them work together for the good of his people.

It is not uncommon for those who profess religion to observe, "We may as well submit and resign ourselves to God as not, for after all our discontent his will must be done; we can alter nothing." This is true, but there is no submission or resignation in it. Can we imagine, because we do not openly quarrel with his dispensations that we cordially acquiesce in them? This is acting like persons taken captive by an enemy, and made to bear a foreign yoke, who suffer it *merely* because they cannot help themselves, but

who have no love to their condition. If an opportunity offer, they will make their escape, and immediately return to their own country.

But this is not the case with those who consider every providential circumstance as coming directly from the hand of God, and as being the effect of his wisdom and goodness: they so conduct themselves as to express their confidence in him, not wishing that it should have been otherwise, but are desirous that their afflictions may not be removed until they have accomplished the end for which they were sent.

This state of mind is not incompatible with a sense of the evils we feel; nature must feel, and is allowed to do so; the Saviour felt, and we, while we kiss the rod that smites us, may deeply feel the pain it inflicts. Neither is it incompatible with fervent prayer to God for the removal of our afflictions; the Saviour was resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, though he repeatedly prayed that, if it were possible, the bitter cup might pass from him. Nor is it incompatible with using lawful endeavours for their removal; indeed this is our duty.

To be insensible under sufferings is stoical. We are as much forbidden to despise the chastening of the Lord, as we are forbidden to faint when we are rebuked of him. We should consider God's fatherly strokes as precious favours, needful blessings, pledges of his kindness and love. They will soon be over; and though for the present they are not joyous but grievous, they will certainly bring us real benefit in the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

It is admitted that this resignation of mind to God's will is of rare and difficult attainment; nevertheless it is maintained that it enters so much into real Christianity, that it would be unsafe to suppose ourselves Christians unless we possess it in some good degree.

Examine thyself then, O my soul; ask whether in the sorrows of life, the afflictions of thy body, and all the trials thou art called to endure, thou obeyest the divine command, "Be still, and know that I am God."

VIII. Christianity will evidence itself by steady perseverance in the ways of God; not turning aside either to the

right hand or to the left. Many persons seem to run well in those ways for a while, but are afterwards hindered. Instead of girding up the loins of their mind, being sober and hoping to the end, they become indifferent towards divine things, and go again into the world.

Instances of this kind frequently occur, furnishing awful proof of the deceitfulness of sin, and of the force of temptation. No man can prove himself a Christian, unless he persevere in obedience to the divine will. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

We shall never find the way to heaven, unless we walk in this world as becometh saints. "If any man will come after me," saith Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." It is greatly to be lamented that many who call themselves Christians, and who would be thought so by others, are, comparatively speaking, careless of their moral conduct. They indulge in maxims of carnal policy, unite themselves with improper persons, follow the sinful and expensive customs of the world, lay their hands on dishonest gain, and are not careful to pay their just debts.

There are others who imagine that they were once called by the Holy Ghost to the knowledge and enjoyment of divine truth, and who at that period seemed zealous in the ways of God, but who have since grown cold and indifferent in those ways; and yet they suppose themselves to be of the number of God's elect, not considering that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Through a mistaken view of God's eternal purposes, they give themselves no trouble about growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. However persons of this description may value themselves on their understanding the Scriptures, or on their enjoyment of the liberty of God's people, they are not Christians, and therefore cannot be in the way to eternal felicity. As Christ died a sacrifice for sin, so we must die to it; we must "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

It is not uncommon for professing Christians of long standing to assure younger ones, who are active and diligent, lively and zealous, in the ways of God, that they *must* experience a change—must come down from the mount, as they express it, and become like themselves; that is, lukewarm. But there is no necessity for such a change, and it is evident that this is done more to excuse themselves than to instruct their younger brethren. What they say frequently comes to pass; so frequently indeed, that, though occasioned by want of watchfulness and prayer, it is with many considered as what cannot be avoided. But this is an alarming condition. God had somewhat against the church at Ephesus, because they had left their first love: he deemed it a criminal thing, on account of which he threatened them with heavy judgments. Let young Christians, therefore, beware how they fall into this mistake. Nothing will be wanting on God's part to render them diligent and attentive, and to enable them to persevere in his ways, with increasing vigour, to the end of their lives, that so an entrance may be administered unto them abundantly into his everlasting kingdom. Let them guard against the first declensions of heart from God, and earnestly pray that he may keep them by his power through faith unto salvation.

To conclude. A sense of the evil of sin, godly sorrow on account of it—faith in Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour—delight in divine exercises—gratitude to God—holy love—submission and resignation to the divine will—with a steady perseverance in the ways of holiness, are all united in Christianity. Where these exist, they prove that new and heavenly birth to have taken place without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, but of which if we are the subjects, we shall, after the toils of this life, sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the general assembly and church of the first-born written in heaven, and enjoy the felicity of that holy and happy place for ever and ever.

But should we be numbered with those who live and die without experiencing the spiritual change implied in these exercises of mind, nothing awaits us in the world to come

but eternal perdition. We should therefore most carefully and impartially examine our state, lest we be found at last among those wretched and miserable beings to whom the Judge will say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

How could we endure to be banished from God, and to dwell for ever where his wrath is poured out to the uttermost? "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall abide with everlasting burnings?" There is reason to fear, lest many now favoured with the means of grace should, to their own amazement, sink from under these means into those very burnings; into that devouring fire. And surely the way from the house of God on earth to the place of his righteous indignation, is the worst passage that can be found thither.

O my soul, let thy salvation from sin and misery be thy first, thy most anxious concern. *Now*, while health and opportunity continue, bring thyself to the touchstone of truth. Be not afraid of the consequence; it is better to know the worst of thy condition before it be too late, than that thou shouldst be blinded by sin and ignorance to thy eternal ruin. Be not alarmed at the thought of thy sins: there is a Saviour, and a great one, able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Remember the promises he has made to all who seek his mercy, and also that he is faithful to his promises; none of his words shall fail; he will hear the cry of the humble, and save all them that trust in him.

CHAP. X.

ON LOVE TO GOD.

Love is a passion which is capable of being either highly beneficial, or extremely injurious : it is therefore necessary that it should be regulated by an enlightened understanding. If it be fixed on improper objects, we shall be led into improper conduct, and shall thereby contract guilt before God. Knowledge of the nature of the objects on which we place it, is essential to its due regulation ; by this knowledge we shall be able to estimate things, not according to the gratification they afford to our senses, but according to their real value, and the service they will render us in a time of need, which is their only true estimate.

The sinful direction of this passion has been the cause of many and great evils ; indeed there is scarcely any evil found amongst men, that is not in some way or other to be traced to it. It is therefore of great importance that our affections be placed on an object in which there is no danger, but which on the contrary is able to afford us the highest gratification and delight. This object is God. The more we love him, the happier we shall be, love to him being both the duty and the felicity of intelligent creatures.

To know that God is infinitely good in himself, that he is our Creator, and that he is able to bestow upon us the greatest possible good, is a sufficient reason why we should love him, had he not expressly commanded it. But he has commanded it ; and not to comply is a denial of his authority.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” This love was engraven on the heart of man in his primeval state, and is the first and great commandment : it implies, in its perfec-

tion, the possession of all that is holy, just, and good ; and without some degree of it, there can be no religion in the soul. Love to God as a holy God precedes all the fruits of righteousness, and will continue in exercise not only through time but to eternity. Other duties are inseparably connected with it, but there is none of them which, in all points is equal to it. Let us then seriously consider its paramount importance.

This command requires that God be the object of our supreme affection ; that our love be placed upon him in a sense in which it is not placed on any other being ; for he himself is more than all other beings ; and by so much as he exceeds them in the glorious attributes of his nature, by so much the more should he be loved.

He is the sum and substance, the central point, and the fountain-head, of all that is amiable and excellent ; there is nothing that deserves regard in any of his creatures but what proceeded from him. There is no language by which his natural and moral excellencies can be sufficiently described. The brightest and the grandest things known to us are employed in the sacred oracles to set him forth ; yet he is infinitely above them all. The blaze of his glory fills heaven with light and joy ; and all the happiness that is found upon earth originates in him. “ *He is exalted above all blessing and praise.* ” “ He hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him ? ” (Isa. xl.) He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible ; the only wise God ; he hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all ; he is clothed with honour and majesty. His grandeur and magnificence overpower even the seraphim, and constrain them to cover their faces beneath the glorious refulgence. Yet we, sinful mortals, may learn his name, and love his perfections ; great as he is, he condescends to accept our love, as though it could add

to his felicity. We ought then to love him, because he is worthy, in his own nature, of our supreme regard.

Nor is this the only reason. He has displayed his greatness in unison with his goodness. All our mercies flow from him; he is the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good gift, and every perfect gift. Temporal favours are proofs of his attentive care over us, but they bear no comparison with his spiritual and eternal blessings. He sent his only begotten, and his best beloved Son, to die the accursed death of the cross; to atone for our sins, and to redeem us from everlasting death. He also bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, by whose operations our souls are purified from sin, and made meet to dwell for ever with him. Therefore both what he is in himself, and what he has done for us, have so great a claim on our affection, that not to love him must render us odious and contemptible in his sight, and expose us to his just and righteous displeasure. Love to God rectifies disorder and confusion among human passions. As the planets move round the sun, and by the power of attraction are kept from flying from him; so when our supreme affection is placed on God, our powers and passions are regulated by its influence. Supreme love to God, however, is not incompatible with subordinate degrees of love to our relations and friends, nor with a proper regard to the bounties of his providence. When Christ says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;" the word "*hate*" signifies only a less degree of love, and not hatred in the common acceptation of that term. Him whom we love most we shall study to please most, and shall prefer his will and interest to those of all others. No one but God is worthy of this place in our affection. Neither our nearest and dearest relatives, our most intimate friends, nor even our own lives, must be preferred to him, for this would be idolatry; it would be to place the creature before the Creator. This kind of idolatry is committed by great numbers amongst us; and though not exactly like that practised in the heathen world, is nevertheless much more criminal, be-

cause it is committed in a land where the glorious gospel of the blessed God shines with conspicuous brightness. Not only a few scattered thinly about our country, but vast numbers in all our cities, towns, and villages, both among the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, are guilty of it. Many however as they are, an awful doom awaits them at the last great day, unless they turn to God, and love and serve him with all their hearts. The command for us to love God is given without any allowance for our depravity, and is as obligatory upon us as it was upon our first parents, while they retained that purity of heart in which they were created.

Neither the authority nor the extent of the law can be altered on account of the rebellion of the subject; this would reflect on the lawgiver, by virtually admitting the injustice of his law. To love God according to the command is all that man could do in his state of innocency; and now that he is become guilty, he ought to do no less. Had he continued in obedience to God, he would no doubt have been continued in happiness; but when he lost the rectitude of his nature by disobeying his authority, he made himself obnoxious to his wrath. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so that death passed upon all men, for that, or as it might be translated, *in whom*, all have sinned." Adam was the federal head, or the representative of his posterity, nor did sin enter into the world, save to the personal condemnation of Eve, till he also ate of the forbidden fruit. In him the whole human race apostatized from God; his blood was attainted for rebellion, and from thence that evil nature originated from which all our transgressions proceed. Nor should we perplex ourselves about the awfully deep and incomprehensible dispensation of God, in permitting the entrance of sin and death into this world; but we should learn to adore his grace for providing an invaluable remedy for that awful event which, however inexplicable to mortals, we are sure was consistent with his perfections. It is enough for us to know, that what was binding on Adam, in reference to his Creator, is binding on us, unless it be maintained that an alteration in the circumstances of man

has made an alteration in the law. But this cannot be maintained. The change took place, not in the law, but in Adam, and this change, with all its consequences, was effected by his own free will, without the compulsive interference of the Deity.

It is an erroneous notion that if men could love God now as Adam did before he fell, they would not be the subjects of real religion. It is true Adam could have no faith in the vicarious sufferings of Christ, but it is equally true that his circumstances did not require it. He could not believe in what was not revealed, nor obey in what was not commanded. But let it be asked whether, if men loved God as Adam did before he fell, and any thing were revealed to them by their Creator, or enjoined upon them by his authority, they would not immediately believe, and instantly obey it? Perfect love would not admit of unbelief and disobedience. We conclude, therefore, that the love to God required by the moral law is the same in its principle as that which the gospel makes necessary to salvation. Christians have this love shed abroad in their hearts—their hearts are directed into it by the Holy Spirit; they put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is created in knowledge after the image of him that created him. This is the image of God. He creates souls anew, by renewing the image in which Adam was first formed, and to which the souls of men are restored by the grace of the eternal Spirit. To argue therefore that our first father was not a *spiritual* man, is to argue against the spirituality of the Divine Being, and also against the spirituality of that holy principle formed in the soul in its new creation.

The command to love God is given to us, without regard to a middle state or condition between love to him, and that enmity towards him which is common to our carnal nature. Nor is there the least intimation in the Scriptures of such a middle state. Every man either loves God or hates him. Indifference may exist as to affection towards other objects; but it cannot exist in reference to God. He that is not for him in his heart and affection, is against him. There are persons who, from something peculiar in their circumstances,

are not able to say with much certainty that they love God, who yet have real love towards him, and discover it by their attachment to his ways, and his people. This cannot argue any uncertainty as to their state, however it may affect their comfort. They do not rejoice in God as they would do if they could say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" but still they are accepted of God through Jesus Christ. There are others, of whom we cannot speak with such confidence: they seem to have a liking for God, for his ways, and for his people; but there is something about them of so contrary a nature, that we cannot conclude that they are Christians. They seem to stand between the church and the world, and to belong to neither; they have religion enough to prevent their going wholly into the world, and yet not enough to influence them to give themselves to the Lord, and to his people according to his will. They are often found in God's house; but they do not realize the spirituality of divine worship, nor yield themselves to him, as those that are alive from the dead. Did these persons love God, they would be decided for him; they would at once renounce the carnal policy by which they are actuated, and would firmly attach themselves to the church of Christ. This is a dangerous condition; nor is there much hope, humanly speaking, that those who have remained in it for some years will ever become decided. To all such we say, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." No man can serve two masters; it is impossible to form a coalition between God and the world. If the Lord be God, they should choose him for their portion, and devote themselves to his service. If Jesus Christ be the only Saviour, they should cleave to him, and place their dependance upon him. If the Bible be the only revelation of God, and contain his will, they should receive the whole of it; they should submit their understanding to its teaching, and be no longer indifferent to what so intimately concerns their eternal happiness. The respectability and outward decency of such persons may be highly esteemed among men, even among good

men : they should, however, remember, that what, in some instances is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God, who requires that we should give him our hearts, our whole hearts. Satan will be content with what the Lord abhors ; if we will but occasionally serve him, he will not request the whole of our service, lest he should lose the whole of it ; and thus by allowing men to be partially religious, he leads them on to eternal death.

It is not necessary to prove the perfection of love to God, in order to prove its existence ; but if we love him at all, he will be more dear and more valuable to us than all earthly things ; we shall mourn that we do not love him more, and shall long to be entirely transformed into his likeness.

That the reader may form just ideas of his own condition in reference to this heavenly grace, I shall proceed further to state some scriptural evidences of possessing it.

1. They who love God, in the spirit of the command of which we have spoken, will be earnestly desirous to live to his glory. They will humbly and constantly desire that in all things he may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Being not their own, but bought with a price, they would glorify God in their bodies, and in their spirits, which are his. This will make them active in his service. They may not themselves be able to do much for his name, yet the little they can do will be done with pleasure. The love of Christ will constrain them to activity in his cause, nor will any service be deemed too difficult, or any sacrifice too great, which he requires. They consider it their duty, their privilege, and their honour, whether they eat or drink, to do all to the glory of God. In the common affairs of life, in which men in general have no higher motive than the gratification of their appetites, or the accomplishment of their carnal purposes, those who love God will endeavour to glorify him. This disposition of mind elevates them above the trifles of this world, and possesses them with dignity superior to its sorrows, or to its joys ; to its prosperity or its adversity. From the love which they have to God, they say with peculiar feeling, " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none upon earth that I desire be-

side thee." To suppose that we love God, if we do not possess this spirit, is to deceive ourselves: he himself regards his own glory as the grand end of all his works. So also did Christ, who said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." That which is the end of the divine conduct, and which was eminently promoted by Christ, must be worthy of the constant attention of all wise and good men.

2. They who love God, will also love their fellow-men. The command to love our neighbour as ourselves, is next in order and magnitude to that which requires us to love God. Neither of these can exist alone; they are inseparably united, and influence each other. If a man pretend to love God while he indulges in ill will, enmity, or dislike to men, he deceives himself; "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also." There is greater difficulty in living in the exercise of love to God, than of love to man. God is not the object of sight as man is; and in our present state we have great dependence on the senses; our affection is more easily drawn forth by an object which we can see, and be sensibly familiar with, than by one that we can only discern by faith. If we would comply with the divine command, we must love men in general, and have no other bounds to our affection than that of the human family. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." We are all united by the tie of brotherhood, having originally but one common father. The mightiest monarch and the meanest beggar sprang from the same stock, and are brethren, by however many generations they may be removed from each other. But love to man, as founded on moral excellency, admits of a preference among its objects. We are commanded to do good to all men, but *especially* unto them that are of the household of faith. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; and though human goodness cannot extend to God it may extend to the saints. If we truly delight in God, we shall also delight in them; they will be the ob-

jects of our peculiar regard, and we shall be always ready to do them good. Christian love oversteps the limits of religious denomination, and embraces in its affectionate regards all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. If we thus love men, we thereby prove that we love God, and shall have the evidence thereof in our own souls. "We know (says the Apostle) that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

3. Another proof of love to God is a diligent and constant care not to be guilty of any thing that would offend him. As love in general is tender towards its objects, and endeavours to serve and to please them, so there is nothing more congenial to those who are created anew in Christ Jesus than to serve and please God. "As the true mother, in the great proof of Solomon's wisdom, was distinguished by her love to her child; so we may proportionably say, that a child of God is distinguished by that love which works towards God. We find some whom it never touches to have God dishonoured and disgraced; but it goes to the heart of a true child of God, when his Father is struck at, when his name is reproached, or when any thing is done against his interest." (Howe.) It is characteristic of the regenerate to love God; it is part of their new nature; love to him, is as that of a child to his parent; and children should not offend or grieve their parents. It has been right on some occasions for children of earthly parents to depart from this rule, because they have desired of them what has been incompatible with their paramount duty to God; but he never requires of his children what is inconsistent with their duty to their fellow-men. His commands are all in perfect unison with our nearest relations to each other, with our different conditions, and with our various situations. The more we love God, the more anxious shall we be to discharge with credit both the personal and the relative duties which devolve upon us. Obedience to God takes the precedence of obedience to all creatures; and unless this be our experience, it is certain that love to him cannot be the predominant principle in our hearts. "If ye love me (said the Saviour), keep my commandments."

And again ;—“ He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” It is admitted that in many things we offend all, that we come short of what we should render to God, and that on these accounts we ought to be humble before him, and to implore his pardoning mercy : yet it must be maintained, that his authority is regarded as supreme by those who love him ; and that they keep up a constant warfare with every principle that opposes a complete and perfect surrender of themselves to his service. “ Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice ; and to hearken than the fat of lambs.” External observance of moral precepts is good in the sight of God, only when it springs from a willing submission to his authority. The Lord regards the state of the heart towards him, more than all outward forms ; if this be such as he approves, though the service be small, and accompanied with infirmities, or even with mistakes as to some particulars, he accepts it ; while, in the other case the most specious services, and the most splendid performances, are esteemed as rebellion. “ God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” If the near and intimate relation between God and his people be represented by their dwelling in each other, the being in whom God dwells must be transformed into his own image ; nor can there be any reason to conclude that we are the temples of the living God, or that we dwell in him as our refuge and our rest, unless we feel an affectionate regard for him, and consecrate ourselves to his service.

“ ’Tis love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move ;
The devils know, and tremble too,
But Satan cannot love.”

WATTS.

4. Love to God will discover itself by delighting to meditate on his perfections, and by holding communion with him both in public and in private. His perfections are infinitely above our thoughts ; the seraphim veil their faces and their feet before him, being overwhelmed with the brightness of his glory ; yet we, who are but of yesterday, and who know

nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow, even we are not forbidden to contemplate those perfections, and by divine grace we are taught to know and to love them. And while our minds are thus engaged, we find his infinite and all-glorious nature a source of consolation. God in very deed dwells with men upon the earth, and makes their bodies his living temples. When, by reason of affliction and trial, we are so cast down, that we can find no comfort in our earthly possessions or friends, we are often supported, and even animated, by considering the divine character: our meditation upon him is sweet, and we are glad in the Lord. If we are exercised with pecuniary difficulties, as many of God's people are, the affection of our hearts to him will enable us to say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail; and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." When our sins pass over our heads as a burden too heavy for us to bear, love to God will inspire us with hope in his mercy. Indeed there is nothing that can hurt us while we feel the influence of this love. However dark and trying our path, we shall be enabled to cast ourselves upon the faithfulness of his promise, and shall prove that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. To the man who delights in God, thoughts of his love and grace will become habitual; and he will at times think upon the excellencies and beauties of the divine character, with rapture almost approaching to ecstasy. He will also hold communion with him; his fellowship will be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. A sense of his weakness and of his wants, accompanied with affection to his heavenly Father, will cause him to bow his knees before the throne of grace, and to pour out his heart to him. In the secrecy and silence of the closet, he will greatly rejoice in the divine mercy, and be filled with all the fulness of God. The Spirit of adoption will enable him to realize his relation to him, who keepeth covenant and

mercy with his people. At such happy seasons he will say,

“Be earth with all her scenes withdrawn,
Let noise and vanity be gone ;
In secret silence of the mind,
My heaven, and there my God I find.”

WATTS.

Nor can they who love God, live without such interviews; all their springs of peace and joy are in him; the whole creation is to them a blank, unless they feel his presence; the light of his countenance creates their day, and fills them with divine pleasure.

It is not forgotten that one of the sacred writers says, “I remembered God and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” (Psalm lxxvii. 3.) Expressions of this kind, uttered by holy men, do not argue against the goodness of God to his people, or against the nature and effects of their love to him; they only show us how necessary it is to live under the influence of this love. If through the power of temptation, and the depravity of human nature, we sin against the Lord, we lose the comfort arising from the exercise of affection towards him, and experience the consequences of our guilt. This is both wise and just; it being suited to produce in us watchfulness against sin, and a desire to be holy.

If we have no real love to God, whatever be our profession of religion, it is vain; we may draw nigh to him with our mouth, and honour him with our lips, but our heart will be far from him. If we love him in sincerity and in truth, he will, notwithstanding our difficulties and trials, our fears and our sorrows, take care of us through all the changes of mortal life; and when flesh and heart fail, he will be the strength of our heart, and our eternal portion. When Jesus Christ shall come the second time without sin unto salvation, we shall be joined to all the faithful; to the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and with them enter into the joy of our Lord, and sit down on his throne. In that holy and happy place we shall love God with an affection intense and uninterrupted, and shall behold his face without an intervening cloud.

O my soul, dost thou love God, thy Creator, thy kind and bountiful Benefactor, thy gracious and merciful Preserver? God, who sent his Son to die for sinners, that by his death he might redeem them from everlasting destruction? I repeat it, Dost thou love him, or not? If thou say, Yes, produce thy proof; in what does it consist? Dost thou possess a hatred to sin, a love to holiness? a love to his word, to his ways, and to his people? This being certain, it is equally certain that thou lovest God.

Examine thyself impartially,—put the question close to thy heart; obtain a correct answer. Do not put this subject off till some future period. It is of the first and greatest importance; therefore be in earnest. What is said in reference to love to Christ is applicable with respect to love to God. “If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.” Let him be accursed when God shall come to judgment.

May God of his great goodness teach us so to understand the loveliness of his nature, and our obligations for the favours he has conferred upon us, as that our hearts may be firmly attached to him, and that this attachment may constrain us to cheerful and holy obedience to his will, and to admiring gratitude for his infinite mercy. Amen.

CHAP. XI.

ON THE DUTY OF MEN TO READ AND OBEY THE SCRIPTURES.

In writing to the church at Philippi the apostle says, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe;”—things which he had formerly preached to them and the other churches, but which he now repeated, in order that he might impress them more powerfully with a sense of their importance, and cause them more duly to appreciate their excellence.

There are some subjects the repetition of which does no good, to mention them once being sufficient; while to others we can scarcely refer too frequently, they being so interesting in their nature, and the consequences of properly attending to them so far exceeding all possible calculation. Such are the subjects contained in the word of God. We need instruction. Line upon line, and precept upon precept, are necessary, in order permanently to impress our minds, and to engage us to pursue the important instruction with becoming ardour. Yet after all we read and hear from this word, it is evident that what is of but little importance when viewed in the light of eternity, occupies more of our time and attention than those invisible realities with which we must soon be familiar. Undoubtedly we ought to attend to the business and duties of life; this is required of us, not only by our relation to mankind, but also by the law of God; yet this attention ought not to be pleaded in extenuation of that criminal anxiety so common to mankind relating to objects which perish in the using.

Some things have been already said to urge upon the reader a due regard to the sacred writings: yet, though I would not weary him with admonitions, I beg that he will allow me again to remind him of their value, and to enforce upon him that diligent, attentive, and persevering perusal of them, which is inseparably connected with his present and everlasting happiness. It is an invariable rule, that love to God discovers itself by delight in his word: they cannot exist separately; the one is necessarily implied in the other. To take pleasure in the streams shows that the fountain is acceptable to us; but not to take pleasure in them makes it evident that it is not acceptable.

There is no natural obstacle in the way of our duty. The sacred oracles are not far from us: we have no occasion to ascend into heaven, or to descend into the deep; this is a land and an age of Bibles; they are translated into our own language, from which the goodness and mercy of God conspicuously appear. His gracious providence superintended those various, and, so far as mortals could perceive, uncertain events, the result of which was to give to this happy

country his holy word in a form suited to the circumstances of its inhabitants: he has also kindly preserved it for our use. This lays us under great obligations, and calls loudly upon us to improve so great a privilege; which if we do not, it would have been much better for us not to have received it.

Whatever be our earthly possessions, they bear no proportion to God's word. This enriches and ennobles the poor; whilst, without it, the pomp and splendour of the rich are stamped with comparative insignificance and poverty. What the orb of day is to the natural world, this is to the moral: as without the light of the one we should be left in total darkness, so without the other we should be in the most profound ignorance. With the Bible in our hands, and its laws engraven on our heart, whatever our circumstances may be in other respects, we have a goodly heritage.

Though we live in a day when revelation is extending over a great part of the globe, there are still many places where it is unknown; where the inhabitants sit in darkness, and dwell in the habitations of cruelty. What but the mercy of God gave us birth in a land of light, and in the valley of vision? We are not more deserving than rude and barbarous savages, upon whom the light of the Sun of righteousness never shone: it is therefore our imperious duty to study the most effectual way of living to the glory of our divine Benefactor, which we cannot do if we do not understand his word.

The wise and the good in all ages have loved and esteemed the word of truth. It has been a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path: it has guided them with safety through the difficulties and trials of life, and has ultimately conducted them to the throne of God.

It was a consolation to Job, when in his affliction his friends charged him with hypocrisy, that in health and prosperity he had esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food. David made God's statutes his song in the house of his pilgrimage: his testimonies he took as his heritage for ever, and he found his words sweet unto his taste; yea, sweeter than honey to his mouth. Jeremiah

says to God, "Thy words were found of me, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." In the discharge of his prophetic office, he met with much opposition, and endured great trials; but, by meditating on the revelation which God had made, he bore those trials with fortitude. By the prophet Micah Jehovah asks, "Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" to give an answer to which question we need only consult the history of the church, or the individual experience of good men. Multitudes have found its doctrines, precepts, and promises, of the greatest service to them, even in the most afflictive condition. Nor are its consolations exhausted. Like an everflowing stream, which enlivens and fertilizes the valley through which it passes, this word enlivens and fructifies the souls of men; whilst without it they are like a desert land, or a barren heath. The apostle Paul, after he was renewed in the spirit of his mind, delighted in the law of God after the inward man. Though as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law a Pharisee, he knew something of the holy scriptures before this; yet, not being spiritually illuminated, he did not perceive their real value. But when he who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, he beheld wondrous things out of God's law, and felt its influence; he perceived the extent of its requisitions, and was deeply convinced of his obligation for the rich mercy, and the free grace, which are therein revealed.

The Saviour admonished the Jews to search the Scriptures. The types and prophecies thereof were fulfilling among them by his appearance, his doctrines, and his miracles; yet they knew it not. They were so blinded by pride and national prejudices, that though he, in whom the Mosaic economy and the prophetic Scriptures united, was then in the midst of them, they were ignorant of his divine character and mission, and therefore rejected and set him at nought. How necessary it was therefore for them to search, without prejudice, those writings which testified of him, marking his character with exactness, and mi-

nutely describing the events that should take place in his day !

This also is necessary for us, lest unhappily we, like them, should suppose that we have the knowledge of God, while we are destitute of it.

It is said that the original word is very expressive, signifying to uncover, to explore, to strip, or to make bare; to search by feeling. We should be as anxious to know the meaning of the Scriptures as those are who dig deep into the earth to find the most precious metal. We may admit that they are the word of God, and that all they contain is true, while yet their truths have no hold on our hearts, nor abiding in our souls. We may even esteem ourselves zealous Christians, while we are total strangers to their transforming efficacy. The Jews had no doubt that they were the people of God, and that they were sure of his favour, both in this world and in the next, notwithstanding they rejected and crucified his only begotten Son. What thought can be more affecting than that of having the true sayings of God in our mouths, and being ignorant of the salvation which they teach ?

Or if this expression be understood as implying that the Jews *did* search the Scriptures, which is perhaps its true meaning; it yet conveys the idea, that notwithstanding this practice they were destitute of the knowledge of their true import. This we fear is the state of many amongst us. They read the Scriptures, but do not enter into their spiritual meaning; they do not see their beauty, nor understand their application to themselves. The question put by Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readeest?" should frequently be put to our own hearts; nor should we be satisfied until we experience the quickening influence of God's Spirit accompanying the word of his truth, to instruct and sanctify our souls.

The apostle James exhorted the twelve tribes to whom he addressed his epistle, to lay aside all superfluity of naughtiness, and to receive with meekness the ingrafted word which was able to save their souls; to look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein; assuring them, that in

not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the work, they would be blessed in their deed ; in which exhortation he exactly describes our duty. The word which we translate "look into" is very emphatic, and signifies that deep and attentive consideration given to a thing or subject which a man cannot bring up to his eyes, and therefore must bend his back and neck, stooping down, that he may see it to the greatest advantage. This is directly opposite to that careless and inattentive reading or hearing of the word of God of which many called Christians are guilty ; and also to the conduct of some who, though they hear it and read it with a degree of attention, yet, through some specious but delusive and sophistical reasoning, neglect to obey its precepts. The knowledge of these persons respecting Christian doctrine may be extensive ; they may strenuously defend its truth, and even seem to desire its universal diffusion ; yet they do not resign themselves to its dictates. Their attention is all employed about externals ; they perceive not their lost state ; nor do they flee to Jesus as the only refuge for the guilty and undone. Though their exterior deportment may be in many respects amiable, yet, not being cleansed by the word and Spirit of God, they are within full of all uncleanness. Such persons may have short-lived convictions of their sinfulness, and anxiety respecting the danger of their state ; they may ineffectually struggle to return to God, and may be the subjects of fearful apprehensions that they are not truly converted ; but they overcome all by having recourse to their knowledge of the Scriptures, and to the supposed purity of their moral character.

When Jesus had spoken many parables in the hearing of his disciples, he asked them, "Have ye understood all these things ;" they said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, "Therefore every scribe instructed into the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." If this be referred to their work, as ministers of the word, after his ascension, it also intimates that Christians in general should be careful to understand that word ; that those who are truly instructed into its meaning will deem it a treasure ;

and that they must exemplify the instructions received, in their conduct, by living for the good of others, and for the glory of God ; letting their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

In the parable of the sower, which represents the condition of persons to whom the gospel is made known, some heard the word to whom it became like seed sown by the way-side, which the fowls came and devoured. Others received it as upon stony ground, where, though it forthwith sprung up, yet because it had no deepness of earth, when the sun was up, it was scorched and withered away. Another part of it fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked it. Only a fourth part of it fell upon good ground, and brought forth fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. This shows the small number of real Christians when compared with those who profess the religion of the Son of God : and it should certainly cause us most seriously to examine our own state. How do we know that we are not way-side hearers, stony-ground hearers, or such as receive the word of God among thorns ? Are we daily bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, and do we yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead ?

The gospel is the food of enlightened minds. They relish and digest it ; and it is converted by their faith into spiritual nourishment. It produces peace and comfort to their souls, and serves as a bulwark to defend them against the assaults of earth and hell : it supports their minds under afflictions of body, and in the mysterious dispensations of providence. “ Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, receiveth blessing from God ; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.” There are no sinners like those who sin against gospel light, nor are there any sins like theirs. If the word of God have not a good effect upon us, our guilt will thereby be increased. If we resemble the ground which after cultivation beareth only noxious weeds, we are

nigh unto cursing. Not to be preparing for eternal happiness by the sanctifying influence of the gospel, evinces that we resemble those who will finally be rejected of God. If we receive the word of God in the love of it, and it dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, its doctrines, precepts, warnings, and examples will discover to us the evil of sin, will detect it under all its forms, and will excite fervent affections towards holiness ; it will furnish us with directions, motives, and encouragements for every thing good and excellent ; it will transform our souls into its holy nature ; and it will influence us to dedicate our whole powers to the service of God.

Nor is there any medium between thus heartily embracing, and rejecting it ; between submitting to its authority, and renouncing that authority. It is vain to seek to reconcile God and mammon ; to be at the same time the friend of God, and the friend of the world. “ He that is not with me,” saith Christ, “ is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.” If we are on the side of the world, of sin, and of the devil, we must expect our reward with the enemies of religion ; but if we are on the side of holiness, of Christ, and of God, we shall be eternally happy. Let us therefore see that we refuse not him who speaketh to us from heaven, for how shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation ?

If it seem to some readers that we make too much of receiving the gospel, or that what we say implies that it is rejected by a much greater number than those who do reject it ; if they think that men in general are not thus negligent of divine authority, and that they are not so unmindful of what involves their everlasting happiness ; we recommend to them a serious consideration of the words of Christ to his disciples, when he sent them out to preach—“ He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.” To “ hear,” in this passage, signifies to obey ; any thing short of which is deemed despising the message,—the messenger who brings it,—the authority under which he acts,—yea, even God himself. What crime can be more offensive

to the ever-blessed Jehovah than this? Of his own unsolicited goodness and mercy he sent his beloved Son to suffer and to die, that he might accomplish the redemption of guilty men; and he has graciously sent the tidings of this to us in his word, inviting and beseeching an attention to it, and our acceptance of this redemption. To treat such benignity with indifference, is a crime of the most flagrant order; it discovers a mind at enmity with God, and must expose us to the most awful consequences. If we enquire into the nature of gospel obedience, Jesus Christ teaches us; "If any man (says he) will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me:"—a conduct quite contrary to that of the greatmajority of those to whom the gospel is preached; yet nothing less than this can be termed obedience to Christ. Where shall we find men who from love to him, and in imitation of his example, mortify their pride, ambition, avarice, and self-love; deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and, in obedience to his commands, love their enemies, bless them that curse them, do good to those that hate them, and pray for those who despitefully use them and persecute them? If it be said that such injunctions cannot be complied with by fallen man, it may be replied that Christ has made them a part of his religion, and therefore that to suppose the practice of them impossible, is to bring a charge against him highly derogatory from his wisdom. Should it be said that the number of those who are thus obedient to him is very small, this we believe to be the real case; and from this consideration we urge the reader to examine himself on a point of so great importance. If obeying or disobeying the gospel involved temporal results only, we might be less importunate in our solicitation. At most it would affect us only in the present life; and yet, were this really the case, men in general would be much more concerned than they now are. The loss of honour or property affects them much more than the danger of losing their souls. Assure a carnal man that he is in danger of losing what he deems essential to his earthly comfort, and you immediately awaken his fears and anxieties;

yet such is his love of sin, that though he is certified from the infallible word of God, that unless he break off his sins by repentance, and turn unto God through Jesus Christ, he must perish,—he feels no apprehension of danger, but rests secure, not doubting, at least not for any long time together, that it will be well with him at last ; he intends to do all that he deems necessary for the salvation of his soul before he dies. Thus he deceives his own heart, and, except the grace of God mercifully prevent, he sinks down to the grave with a lie in his right hand. O the dreadful consequences of sin in blinding the eyes of the mind, and in alienating the affections from God ! When will men be wise, and consider their latter end ?

Allow me then once more, my reader, to entreat thee to bring home to thy heart a subject so solemn.

Dost thou love God's word ? Is it the joy and rejoicing of thy soul ? Hast thou felt thy need of a Saviour, and appreciated his character as able and willing to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him ? There is no time to lose before thou dealest plainly and truly with thyself. Death is hastening on. Soon thou must yield to his stroke. None can save thee but Christ. His blood, and his righteousness, must be the only ground of thy acceptance before God. Thou art lost for ever, if not saved in this way. But this way is fully and clearly developed in the word of God ; therefore read this word as a dying man, and pray to God to bless and sanctify it to thy instruction and salvation.

“ Almighty God, who of thine infinite mercy hast caused the Holy Scriptures to be written for our use and benefit, grant us the influence of thy Holy Spirit in reading them, that we may so learn their doctrines, precepts, and promises, as that we may be wise unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ thy beloved Son.” Amen.

CHAP. XII.

ON THE PROFITABLE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

To read the Holy Scriptures to profit should be the desire of all who are favoured with them. So inestimable a gift cannot be possessed without great consequences resulting from it. Either our love to divine truth will thereby be increased, or our sin against God will be greatly aggravated. The responsibility of having the word of God in our hands, and of being surrounded by numberless other blessings which we enjoy in this highly favoured country, ought to lead us to such considerations, and to the adoption of such measures, as will tend to our spiritual edification.—Let us then,

I. Consider more particularly the motives for reading the Scriptures with care and attention.

1. The gospel is now preached in many places where forty years ago it was not preached, and education has become much more general than it was at that period. The poor are favoured with gratuitous instruction, and most of them can read the Scriptures for themselves.

2. The Meetings connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society, held for some years past in almost every city, town, and village in this kingdom, have not only tended to overcome the prejudices previously existing among different religious denominations, and to make the respective parties thereof better known to each other, but have also diffused scriptural light among mankind. Speeches delivered on these occasions have been heard by thousands of persons. In them the word of God has been spoken of in some measure according to its importance; and it has been stated

with great emphasis, that they are the wisest and best men who regulate their conduct by its precepts. Our country has now become a land of Bibles; instruction is brought to our very doors; and our attention is almost constantly solicited to spiritual and eternal subjects.

We might have been born in a land covered with darkness, where idolatry and superstition overwhelm the inhabitants, and where the people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. But God has given us birth and education in a land where his character is known, and where his worship is performed in spirit and in truth. How great must be our punishment then if we live and die without improving such invaluable privileges. This should make us feel as dying and accountable creatures, and should teach us rightly to appreciate the means of grace, and thankfully to embrace every opportunity of becoming wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

It is not intended here to convey the supposition that any means, however closely attended, can be of essential service to the souls of men, unless the divine blessing accompany them; but we are encouraged to hope for that blessing. God has said, "Seek and ye shall find, ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you:" and he is faithful who hath promised. Let us therefore trust that he will fulfil to us the good word on which he hath caused us to hope.

3. If we desire to be delighted, instructed, made wise, and enriched with things noble, sublime, and invigorating to the heart, we must be conversant with the Bible.

We cannot enumerate the many subjects into the knowledge of which the Scriptures are designed to instruct us; but we may here name some of them.

(1.) They instruct us in the knowledge of the character and perfections of God. "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work—The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Yet plain as are the marks of intelligence and wisdom impressed upon the objects

around us, they have no voice to teach us the moral perfections of the great Creator. The volume of nature, from the bright luminary of day, to the glow-worm that emits its feeble ray in the autumnal evening ; from the most powerful beast of the forest, to the smallest insect ; from the tallest cedar to the lowliest plant ; with our own existence, convincing us of a prior existence, and thus retrospectively till we arrive at a first cause ; shows that there is a God of boundless might and skill ;—but none of them can fully declare his moral character. Had we nothing but the works of his hands by which to discover him, we should grope in the dark, unable to find our way to the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation. But “ in the Scriptures we read the most rich and admirable discoveries of divine goodness, and all the ways and methods he uses in alluring sinners to himself ;—with what majesty he commands, with what condescension he entreats, with what importunity he woos men’s souls to be reconciled to him ;—with what favour he embraceth, with what tenderness he chastiseth, with what bowels he pitieth those who have chosen him to be their God ;—with what power he supporteth, with what wisdom he directeth, with what cordials he refresheth the souls of such who are dejected under the sense of his displeasure, and yet whose love is sincere towards him. With what profound humility, what holy boldness, what becoming distance, and yet what restless importunity, do we therein find the souls of God’s people addressing themselves to him in prayer ! With what cheerfulness do they serve him, with what confidence do they trust him, with what resolution do they adhere to him in all straits and difficulties ! With what patience do they submit to his will in their greatest extremities ! How fearful are they of sinning against God, how careful to please him, how regardless of suffering where they must choose either that or sinning, how little apprehensive of men’s displeasure while they enjoy the favour of God ! Now all these things which are so fully and pathetically expressed in Scripture, do abundantly set forth to us the exuberancy and pleonasm of God’s grace and goodness towards his people, which makes them delight so much in him, and be so sensible of

his displeasure. But above all other discoveries of God's goodness, his sending his Son into the world to die for sinners, is that which the Scripture sets forth with the greatest life and eloquence. By eloquence I mean, not an artificial composure of words, but the gravity, weight, and persuasiveness of the matter contained in them. And what can tend more to melt our frozen hearts into a current of thankful obedience to God, than the vigorous reflection of the beams of God's love through Jesus Christ upon us? Was there ever so great an expression of love heard of? Nay, was it possible to be imagined, that that God who perfectly hates sin, should himself offer the pardon of it, and send his Son into the world to secure it to the sinner, who doth so heartily repent of his sins as to deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Christ? Well might the Apostle say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." (Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. b. iii. c. 6.)

This Saviour is the great medium by which we arrive at the knowledge of God. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He has revealed all that was needful to be known concerning him. This revelation is the only source of full and clear information respecting God our Maker, and should therefore be esteemed in proportion to its real value, and studied with serious attention and persevering diligence.

" In vain we search, in vain we try,
Till Jesus brings his gospel nigh;
Tis there that power and glory dwell,
Which save rebellious souls from hell." WATTS.

All the appearances, visions, and revelations of Jehovah to the patriarchs and the prophets, were made by the Divine Logos, who afterwards "was made flesh and dwelt among us;" and who, in those manifestations, anticipated that great event. No one really knows any thing of God as the God of grace, but he who receives this knowledge through faith in his Son. The types, promises, and prophecies of the Old Testament, were fulfilled in him. God

therein "set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

(2.) It is only from the Scriptures that we learn the true condition of man. There are many reasons which make it evident that some great change has taken place in him since he was first created by a wise and good Being; yet how strong soever those reasons are, we could not obtain from them that view of our present condition which is given in the sacred volume. Here we learn that God made man in his own image, the powers and faculties of his mind being pure and holy; that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and that so death passed upon all men; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that in consequence of sin our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that the carnal mind is enmity against God; that out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. The truth of these descriptions, awful as they are, has been proved in thousands of instances; yet, were it not for revelation, we could not understand how our nature became thus degraded. The doctrine of human depravity is supposed to be believed by most persons professing the Christian religion, but this is not the case; if it were, they would humble themselves before God on its account, and would earnestly seek the mercy promised to penitent sinners through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord; whereas most of them discover no earnestness at all about that mercy.

(3.) The beginning of true religion in the souls of men is always accompanied with a conviction of our lost and miserable condition through sin. This conviction is produced by the blessing of God upon his word. How valuable then is that word, and how earnest should we be to understand its meaning! The Bible teaches the nature of that repentance which is connected with salvation, and of that faith without which it is impossible to please God.

The history of the woman who washed the feet of the Saviour with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and the parables of the publican, and of the prodigal son, contain lessons of this kind. The Bible also instructs us in the mercy of God to those who repent of their sins, and declares that he is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon him. We read in the sacred page that the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, and who dwells in the high and holy place, dwells also with him, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Such declarations endear the Sacred Writings to those who feel their guilt and wretchedness, inspire their minds with hope in the darkest seasons, and support them under the heaviest calamities.

(4.) The divine character of him who is the medium of all this mercy to guilty man is fully developed in the sacred book. He who was in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and this was done that he might save guilty creatures from everlasting destruction. Here the trembling sinner may rest with complete satisfaction, and repose with the utmost safety and comfort. He is a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. If the writings of the heathen philosophers and poets be compared with God's word, they sink into insignificance and meanness. No danger can be apprehended from an acquaintance with its contents, no poisonous streams flow from this fountain. Filled with the water of life, its refreshing currents enliven and make fruitful every place where they come: whilst the writings of the heathens, though expressive of strong intellectual powers, debase and pollute the soul. Pardon and peace to the guilty and undone, are proclaimed in the sacred oracles, while the writings of heathens, by describing the abomina-

ble and filthy practices of their supposed deities, tend to increase the guilt of their admirers.

(5.) In the sacred page we see the harmony of the divine perfections illustrated by the cross of Christ. Every other view of God arrays him with so much of awful justice unmingled with love and tenderness, as to exclude the guilty from hope; or so invests him with mercy, as to exclude his perfections of holiness, justice, and truth, and so to drown the voice of conscience.

4. A fourth motive for reading the Bible with care and attention is, its being the standard of right sentiments. Men of various denominations, even though they widely differ from each other, and perhaps have sentiments contrary to each other, appeal to the Bible for countenance and support. Such a unanimous appeal to one common standard does not indeed prove its divine inspiration, but it shows the opinion of men respecting its authority in matters of controversy, which opinion could originally be derived from no other source than a universal belief of its inspiration. If it be enquired how men equally wise and good should attempt to prove theories differing so much from each other by the same book, it may be answered, that in general they learn those theories before they study that book, and, their views being already formed, they come to it, not to learn, but to confirm themselves in what they have already learned. Such prepossessions are very strong, and being gradually and imperceptibly formed in the mind, they influence the judgment, and too often constitute the basis of discordant religious opinions.—This leads us,

III. To a practical improvement of the subject.

1. Let us imagine that we are now to read the New Testament for the first time, and without knowing any thing of the jarring opinions of men respecting its contents, —or let us try to conceive what would be the views of persons among whom it should be introduced as completely a new book. If we are able to do this in any tolerable degree, it may possibly alter some of our present views of its doctrines, ordinances, or precepts.

2. The Scriptures being the word of God, they should

always be read with the utmost respect and reverence. To promote these feelings, let us ask ourselves, What is it I am going to read? For what purpose was this book put into my hands? How has that purpose been answered in the many years I have been favoured with it? Have I received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God? Has it, through the divine blessing, subdued my naturally perverse will, enlightened my understanding, sanctified my affections, and caused me to hunger and thirst after righteousness? Have I seriously considered that I shall at the last, awful, and solemn day, be judged by its contents? Such inquiries would have a humbling effect upon our hearts, and increase our sense of interest in the sacred pages. To read them without putting such questions to our minds argues great carelessness in reference to our eternal interests. Yet how often do persons read the scriptures merely to satisfy their conscience, or to fill up a few leisure minutes; to prove the truth or falsehood of an assertion made in a sermon, or to expose the sentiments of better men than themselves!

Some persons have acquired the irreverent and unholy practice of quoting the word of God on the most trifling occasions; their common conversation abounds with scriptural expressions, used by them as witticisms, or dexterous turns of thought. This proves a bad state of mind, and shows that the person is not only destitute of religious feeling, but of correct taste, if not of common sense. Every one who wishes to read the scriptures to edification, and to think of them with comfort, must guard against this low and contemptible practice.

3. It would be of service, when we are about to read this inestimable volume, were we to revolve in our minds the thought, that we shall shortly be incapable of reading it. Our life is very uncertain; we may soon be removed by death; or should life be continued to us for many years, an affection of the brain, a paralysis, or some other disorder, may deprive us of our mental faculties. This has been the case with many good men, some of whom had minds naturally strong and vigorous, and who, by the grace of

God, were taught to read his word with pleasure and delight. Let the aged remember this, and redeem time by doubling their diligence in reading the word of life. God has limited the days of our years to threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour, and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. The young should remember this, and read the word of God every time as though it were the last time they should be so favoured. This thought might cause both the aged and the young to prolong their perusal of that volume, and add seriousness and solemnity to the perusal. Let us endeavour to read it with eternity in full view, realizing the insufficiency of all created things to satisfy the desires of the mind, living by faith upon God, and growing in meetness for that world, where every holy desire shall be satisfied, and we shall know even as also we are known.

4. When we read the Scriptures, let us remember the purposes for which they were written. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." This passage refers to the Old Testament, and shows us that what is therein contained, was not designed exclusively for the benefit of those to whom it was first given, but that it belongs to us also. How much more is this the case now that revelation is finished, and by an indulgent providence put into our hands! We may derive instruction from the writings of uninspired men, but they are liable to err, and therefore no dependence can be placed upon them. If it be asked who is to be the judge of the true interpretation of Scripture, it is answered, that we should be careful how we reject the interpretation of wise, learned, and good men; yet we ought not to resign our consciences to them, because they cannot answer for us at the bar of the Almighty. Every one of us must give an account of himself unto God; and therefore, after the use of the best means in our power to come at the right understanding of Scripture, we should judge for ourselves. Hence we perceive the great impropriety, and indeed

cruelty of the Church of Rome, which keeps the word of God from the common people, takes away the key of knowledge, enters not into the kingdom of heaven itself, and those that would enter in it does all it can to hinder.

5. It would be of use to read the Bible without constant regard to its division into chapters and verses.

In many instances (as before observed) the subjects of which the sacred writers treat, are continued further than the chapters are extended, and sentences are not unfrequently broken by the commencement of a new verse. Most of the Epistles are short. It is desirable to read the whole of one of these at once. This would give us an opportunity of noticing the connexion of doctrine and practice observed in them, much better than can be done when we read only a few verses, or a chapter at one time. This connexion between doctrine and practice is of the highest importance, and should be constantly kept in view, because it shows the connexion between right sentiments and a holy life. Yet where a person's sentiments are right in the main, respecting the great and most important doctrines of religion, by which I mean those that relate to the being and attributes of God, the fall, depravity, and misery of man, the necessity of repentance toward God, and of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and the equal necessity of holiness of heart and life ; and where these sentiments are not merely embraced by his understanding, but so impressed upon his heart, that he may be said to be " changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," though his sentiments upon matters of smaller moment may not fully accord with the word of God, it is admitted that this want of accordance may not produce any striking effect upon his practice, but that he will still be one of those upon whom our heavenly Father will look down with a gracious regard. Indeed without this admission, we should be unable to find out a true Christian ; for who can say that he is guiltless in this matter ? who can say that his sentiments fully accord with the oracles of truth, any more than that his heart and life are free from sin ? We should beware then of passing sentence upon the conduct of

men, merely in consequence of their thinking differently from ourselves; neither, on the other hand, should we conclude that their sentiments must be right, because their lives are in general correct.

We have heard of men of whom it has been said, that a small part of the Scriptures would do for them, their reading being confined to a few chapters where their favourite sentiments are, as they suppose, chiefly maintained. We hope this is not true of any who profess to be called by the Spirit of God to an experimental acquaintance with Christianity. If it be, we recommend them to read with attention the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, with the four Evangelists; to observe the import of the admonitions contained in them; and to examine the character of the persons to whom they were originally addressed.

6. If we desire the word of God to dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, we must not only read it, but meditate upon it. It is not the bare words passing before our eyes, or their being spoken with our tongues, that can do us essential service. He is the blessed man "whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." David says, "Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word. O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day." This will endear the word of God to us, revive our drooping minds, and cheer our languid spirits; it will enlighten our darkness, and gild our prospects for the eternal world.

" May this blest volume ever lie
Close to my heart and near my eye,
Till life's last hour my soul engage,
And be my chosen heritage!"

BEDDOME.

Should any person imagine that he cannot spare time for this exercise, we think he is mistaken. There are but few, if any, who are so constantly employed, as not to be able to redeem the few minutes each day which the reading as much as two chapters would require; and we are sure that none ought to be so engaged. Every one must find time

to die; and how shall we die, if we are ignorant of God and of his word?

Finally, we should accompany our reading with prayer. David prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The most enlightened men need the assistance of God's holy Spirit, to remove from their hearts the darkness occasioned by pride, prejudice, and carnal affections. Diligent prayer to God for his blessing on the reading of his word will increase our sense of dependence upon him, and our humility before him.

Prayer for instruction, unaccompanied by reading the Scriptures, is but little better than presumption; and to read them without prayer, argues an indifference to instruction highly criminal in the sight of God. Both should go together.

If we acknowledge the necessity of thus reading and praying, we cannot begin too soon. Time lost can never be recalled, so as to prevent repentance for its loss. Let us therefore, in the strength of the Lord, begin to read the sacred pages with earnest prayer for his blessing on what we read. Let us guard against whatever has heretofore prevented our persevering in these services, always remembering our certain and awful responsibility to God for our improvement of his word, and of the many other favours he has graciously conferred upon us.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear, read, mark, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAP. XIII.

ON THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

There is a richness, an impressiveness, a beauty, and a dignity, in figurative language, by which it has recommended itself to all ages of the world, and to almost all nations. It both instructs and delights. At the same time that it illuminates the understanding, it holds up a picture to the imagination. Some call it the language of nature; others, that of poetry; it may be truly called the language of both; indeed the latter cannot subsist without it. It is, however, like every thing else, capable of being abused; but when kept, both as to its use and its interpretation, within proper limits, it cannot be too highly estimated.

Between the different parts of the works of God there is a beautiful harmony, which does not, however, infringe upon their wonderful variety. There is a harmony, for instance, as to the senses, the animal functions, and many other particulars, between quadrupeds, birds, fishes, and insects; and there is a harmony or analogy in many respects between the animal and vegetable worlds. This remark might be extended to a great length, and to a vast number of particulars. There is, likewise, an analogy between nature and revelation; nor ought this to be esteemed wonderful, since the same Being who is the Author of the one, is the Author of the other: it is in character, therefore, that the latter should abound in images taken from the former. There is also an analogy, or resemblance, between the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, and the Christian; between various and remote

events recorded or predicted in Scripture, that have taken place, or will take place; between events (and all these according to the divine purpose) in the history of sundry Old Testament personages, and events in the history of our blessed Saviour; and between the miracles which he wrought on the bodies, and the more wonderful displays of healing power constantly exercised upon the souls of men. These and other harmonies, resemblances, or analogies, are a foundation for the imagery, or figurative language, which so much abounds in the sacred volume.

As I intend to confine my remarks to the prophetic writings, and the parables of our Lord, I shall begin with a few general observations on the character of the prophets.

The nature, extent, and different degrees of inspiration received by the prophets, cannot be ascertained, except that they were secured from error, and divinely directed to deliver the will of God to the people. This will was made known by the Urim and Thummim, by the Shechinah, and by dreams and visions. The first of these was something, though we cannot now exactly tell what, on the breastplate of the high priest, by means of which the will of God was consulted, and answers were returned by a visible sign. (Numbers xxvii. 21; Ezra ii. 63.) The second was the dwelling of God between the cherubim on the mercy-seat, or cover of the ark, from whence the Lord answered by an articulate voice. (Exod. xxv. 22; xxix. 42.) The last, which appears to have been the earliest of them all, was when deep sleep falleth upon men. (Gen. xv. 12, 16; xxviii. 12.)

It is highly probable that the prophets did not in all cases understand their own prophecies; yet they might have an undoubting certainty that what they declared was divine.

The manner in which they delivered their messages varied with circumstances. Sometimes they uttered them with a loud voice. (Isa. lviii. 1.) At other times they affixed them in writing to the gate of the temple, where they might be read by all who came thither to worship. (Jer. viii. 2.) On certain occasions they adopted extra-

ordinary methods of exciting attention. Jeremiah made yokes, and put them on his neck, to express the subjection under which the people would soon be brought. (Jer. xxvii. 2.) Isaiah walked naked, that is, without his upper garment, and barefoot, as a sign of the distress that awaited the Egyptians. (Isa. xx. 2.) Ezekiel publicly removed his household goods from the city, to represent the calamities that were approaching. (xii. 1—7.) They also used violent gestures, smiting with the hand, stamping with the foot, and crying out in a loud and earnest manner. (Ezek. vi. 11.) These actions, which were commanded by the Almighty, served to show the awful condition of the people, and the divine benevolence: they also intimated the regard the prophets had for the honour of God, and for the good of mankind.

The prophets did not aspire after worldly greatness, but lived in a plain and retired manner, and generally upon the gifts of the people. The presents they received were bread, fruits, honey, the first fruits of the earth, and probably, on certain occasions, money. (1 Sam. ix. 8; 2 Kings iv. 42.) Their apparel was in unison with the simplicity of their lives. Elijah wore a girdle of leather about his loins, and was clothed with a garment of camel's hair; probably the skin of that animal dressed with the hair upon it. (2 Kings i. 8.)

There is no occasion in our day for the teachers of religion to adopt a mode of dress similar to that of the prophets; but it must be confessed, that for them to be distinguished by marks of worldly greatness, is incompatible with the spirit of the Christian ministry. A modest decency in their dress, adapted to a lowly mind, and suited to the feelings of one who has a high sense of the beauty and excellency of the inward adorning, is far more becoming.

It is not easy to ascertain the order in which the prophets whose writings are preserved for our use, succeeded each other; indeed many of them were contemporary; but the commencement of each seems to have been in the following order; Joel, Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Obadiah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel,

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Four of these, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, are called the former, or larger prophets; and the other twelve the latter, or minor prophets; these distinctions arise from the place which they occupy in our Bibles, and from the relative size of their productions.

The succession of the prophets is well worthy of note, not only as manifesting the merciful regards of God towards the people of Israel, but also the uninterrupted continuance of the prophetic spirit. This gift was not withheld under the patriarchal dispensation: indeed no man can show when it was that God left himself without a witness of this kind. Adam, the father of us all, stands at their head; his declaration concerning marriage, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife," is of the prophetic kind, there being nothing then, either in nature or experience, to justify the assertion. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, all lived under the patriarchal dispensation, and they all possessed the spirit of prophecy. With the Jewish economy the prophetic gift revived, and seemed to increase in its measure or influence. Moses was one of the most eminent of the prophets, and in this respect was an illustrious type of Jesus Christ. Aaron, his brother, declared the will of God to Pharaoh, and Miriam his sister was a prophetess. (Exod. xv. 20.) Deborah, the coadjutrix of Barak, was also a prophetess. Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, seems from her song, (1 Sam. ii. 1—10.) to have had the prophetic spirit. Samuel, her son, was an eminent prophet, and the last and greatest of the judges of Israel. David, Gad, Nathan, Solomon, Iddo, Shemaiah, Ahijah the Shilonite, Elijah, Elisha, and some others, were prophets, besides the sixteen above named, the substance of whose prophecies is written for our instruction. These holy men did not deliver their own imaginations for the will of God, but spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

"The prophets were sometimes called 'Seers,' which signifies one who sees, particularly preternatural sights. A seer and a prophet were in most cases the same, only

with this difference : the *seer* always prophesied ; the prophet did not always see preternatural sights. A seer seems to imply one who frequently met with, and who saw some symbolical representation of God." (Dr. A. Clarke.)

"*Sons of the prophets*" (2 Kings ii. 5.) is an appellation that was given to young men educated in schools established among the Israelites, the president of which was frequently an inspired prophet. (1 Sam. x. & xi.) They were instructed in sacred music, (an art nearly allied to the prophetic office,) and in the knowledge of religion ; and thus by the blessing of God, they were prepared to instruct the people. Between the sons of the prophets, and others who sustained the prophetic office, there was a difference somewhat similar to that which exists in our day, between the ministers of Christ who have been educated in academies or colleges, and those who have not been so educated, but who are nevertheless sent by the Lord to preach to men the way of salvation. The prophet Amos says of himself, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son ; but I was a herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit : and the Lord took me as I followed the flock : and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel:" by which he means that he was not educated in these schools. Whether any of the false prophets were educated in them, we cannot say ; but it is not improbable, the prophetic spirit being so distinct a thing from education. It is evident that all those who are educated for the Christian ministry, whether in or out of the Anglican church, have not the spirit of Christ ; and, therefore, let them hold what living soever they may, or preach among whatsoever denomination of Christians, they are false ministers ; wolves in sheep's clothing.

The prophecies contain frequent allusions to the history and manners of times and places so remote from those with which we are familiar, that ordinary readers cannot, without some help, understand them. Some parts of them, indeed, seem as if they were not intended to be fully understood before the time of their accomplishment, and serve to furnish the age in which that accomplishment takes place with new evidence of their divine inspiration.

It appears necessary that there should be a degree of obscurity about some prophecies, otherwise, humanly speaking, they could not be fulfilled; besides that the just and laudable spirit of industry and attention to their import, which has been of considerable use, would cease if it were too easily gratified. Some of the prophecies which relate to Christ, speak of him as a conquering and reigning Messiah, whilst others describe him in his state of humiliation and suffering. To unite these different conditions in one person, required a spiritual understanding, which the Jews generally did not possess; and being led by their situation to wish for a conquering Messiah, and, by their mistaken notions of the subjugation of all nations by themselves, to expect such a one, they could not perceive that it behoved Christ first to suffer, and then to enter into his glory; nor had they any ideas of the spirituality of his kingdom, and therefore ignorantly, and in unbelief, they were instrumental in fulfilling those very prophecies. "Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii. 8.) Admitting, however, this obscurity, it must be acknowledged that there was sufficient clearness about prophecies in general, for humble and pious persons among the Jews to understand as much of them, even prior to the coming of Christ, as was necessary for their salvation. The ignorance and unbelief of that people could not, therefore, be ascribed to the obscurity of prophecy, but to the depravity of their nature.

The prophetic writings abound with figurative language, some knowledge of which is necessary to the understanding of them. The use of figures first arose from the poverty of language; but it now constitutes one of the chief beauties of composition. The figurative language used by the prophets is taken from various objects, some of which we shall mention.

1. They frequently make use of figures drawn from nature. The sun, moon, and stars, represent kings, queens, princes, or rulers. "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."

(Isa. xxiv. 23.) This intimates, that when God shall set up his kingdom in the earth in its full glory, the majesty of the mightiest kingdoms of this world, as well as that of subordinate ones, shall thereby be eclipsed; and also that his kingdom shall shine in unrivalled and unclouded brightness. "I will cover the heavens, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light." (Ezek. xxxii. 7.) This relates to the dreadful fall of Pharaoh and Egypt, and foretells that, notwithstanding Pharaoh thought himself the great luminary of his day, God would dethrone him, and cover his land with consternation and darkness, resembling that of nature if the sun, moon, planets, and stars were all extinguished.

Light and darkness are used to denote joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity. "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness." (Isaiah lix. 9.) The same figures are also used to denote knowledge and ignorance. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. viii. 20.) "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." (chap. ix. 2.)

Dew, moderate rains, gentle streams, and running waters, signify the blessings of the gospel. "Thy dew is as the dew of herbs." (Isa. xxvi. 19.) "He shall come unto us as the rain." (Hos. vi. 3.) "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." (Isa. xlii. 3.) Immoderate rains, hail, floods, deep waters, torrents, and inundations, denote judgments and destruction. "I will rain upon him an overflowing rain, and great hailstones." (Ezek. xxxviii. 22.) "Waters rise up out of the north, and shall overflow the land." (Jer. xlvii. 2.) Fire, the east wind, and wind in general, are frequently used in the same sense. Wind is sometimes used for what is light and vain. "They have sown the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind." (Hosea viii. 7.)

Rams, and bullocks of Bashan, lions, eagles, sea-monsters, or beasts of prey, are frequently used for cruel and oppressive tyrants and conquerors. "Hear this, ye kine of Bashan, which oppress the poor." (Amos iv. 1.) "The lion is come

up from his thicket." (Jer. iv. 7.) "A great eagle came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar." (Ezek. xvii. 3.) "Thou art as a whale in the seas." (chap. xxxii. 2.)

2. Figures of speech are very often taken by the prophets from the ordinary occupations and customs of life, together with the few arts that were then practised.

Husbandry, in all its parts, and its various implements. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up the fallow ground of your hearts." (Hosea x. 12.) "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." (Joel iii. 13.) "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thy horns iron, and thy hoofs brass." (Micah iv. 13.)

From the occupation of tending cattle we have many images in the writings of the prophets. "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture." (Jer. xxiii. 1.) The teachers and rulers were the pastors, and the people the flock. God here signified to those faithless men, that he would surely punish them for their wickedness.

Some of the images derived from husbandry, the pastoral life, and the tending of cattle, may appear mean to us, though they would not do so to the Jews, whose manner of life was simple and plain; their greatest men, such as Moses, David, Gideon, and others, being husbandmen and shepherds. Accordingly the Messiah himself is frequently spoken of as a shepherd. (Isa. xl. 2.)

The people of the East used in deep mournings to shave the head and beard, and to retire to the house-tops, which in those countries were flat, and furnished with little chambers adapted to the purposes of devotion, and to secret grief. These furnished images to the prophets. They sang dirges at funerals, and accompanied them with a mournful sort of music. These are often referred to, and denote great danger and deep distress. "Mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes; every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped, there shall be lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab." (Jer. xlviii. 36—38; Isa. xv. 2, 3.) The mode of

burying, also, frequently supplied the prophets with images. (Isa. xiv. Ezek. xxvi. 20.)

According to the barbarous customs of those times, conquerors drove their captives before them almost naked, exposed to the heat of the burning sun, or to the inclemency of the weather, and afterwards frequently employed them in grinding at the mills, hence sitting on the ground, the posture in which they worked, and grinding and nakedness, express captivity. "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; take the mill-stones; thy nakedness shall be uncovered." (Isa. xlvii. 1—3.)

The marriage-relation is often used by the prophets to express the covenant between God and his people; and therefore adultery, in prophetic language, denotes their love and worship of idols. They are said to have committed adultery with stocks and stones. (Jer. iii.; Ezek. xxiii. 3. 37.)

The arts of the fuller and of the potter are brought forth on this occasion. (Jer. xviii. 1—10; Mal. iii. 2.) Those also of fishing, of fowling, and of hunting, with the implements belonging to them; the hook, the net, and the snare. "I will send for many fishers, and they shall fish them; for many hunters, and they shall hunt them." (Jer. xvi. 16, 17.) "I will put my hook in thy nose." (Isa. xxxvii. 29.) "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth." (chap. xxiv. 17.) We have also a few images drawn from building; as a foundation, a corner-stone, &c. (Isa. xxviii. 16, 17; Amos vii. 8.)

3. Religion and the things connected with it furnished many images to the prophets. The ceremonial law, the distinctions of clean and unclean, the killing of sacrifices and the feasting upon them; the sacerdotal dress; the tabernacle; the Shechinah; the mercy-seat; the pots, vessels, and other utensils of the temple; and the temple itself, with its splendid services; are all occasionally used as images to set forth the nature and glory of the gospel dispensation, and the excellency of the New Testament worship. We have also images from idolatrous rites; their groves, their high

places, and the worship paid to idols ; to Baal, Moloch, Chemosh, and Ashtaroth. (Isa. iv. 5 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 25 ; Isa. i. 16. xxxiv. 6 ; Ezek. xvi. 10—14 ; Zech. xiv. 21 ; Isa. xxvii. 9.)

4. Some of the prophetic images are borrowed from history, particularly sacred history : from the fall of angels and of man ; the chaos ; the deluge ; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrhah ; the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt ; the descent of the Lord on Mount Sinai ; the resurrection of the dead ; and the last judgment. (Isa. xiv. 12 ; Ezek. xxviii. 14 ; Jer. iv. 23 ; Isa. xxiv. 18 ; xxxiv. 9 ; lxiii. 16-19 ; Micah. i. 3, 4 ; Isa. xxvi. 19 ; xxxiv. 4.)

The above are but a small part of the figurative expressions used by the prophets, yet they serve to show that this kind of language deserves attention. The following observations are intended to assist the reader in distinguishing literal from figurative expressions.

(1.) The literal meaning of words or phrases must be given up, if it be evident that it is not the true meaning, or if it involve an impossibility. God is represented as saying to Jeremiah, “ I have made thee a defenced city, and an iron pillar ; and brazen walls against the whole lands ; ” (chap. i. 18.) the meaning of which must be figurative. It signifies that the powerful persons in the land, who would oppose this prophet, should be no more able to prevail against him, than they could against an impregnable fortress : his defence was of God.

(2.) When the literal meaning of any passage is contrary to the context, or to parallel passages. The Jewish nation is described as stricken ; as having the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint. (Isa. i. 5, 6.) This description must be understood figuratively, because the two following verses delineate their condition in literal terms.

(3.) The connexion of the doctrine must be regarded, as well as that of the context. Whatever, if taken literally, would overturn any doctrine, precept, or ordinance, evidently taught in other parts of the Scripture, must be figuratively understood. In applying this rule we should be careful to let the Scriptures speak for themselves, and not put upon

them the interpretation of a human system, which has often been done, and by which they have been made to appear to teach what in fact they do not contain.

(4.) We should not be desirous of finding too many points of resemblance between the figurative and the literal meaning of any passage. There is generally one principal thing to be noticed, which, if understood, will lead to the true interpretation.

(5.) Care must be taken not to apply the figurative language of the prophets according to modern usages and customs, as this would lead us into mistakes; the customs and usages to which they refer being so different from our own. Thus the prophet Amos (iv. 1.) compares the people of Israel to the kine of Bashan. The point of resemblance is neither strength nor utility; but these kine were remarkable for their size, fatness, and wantonness. The comparison therefore intimates, that the people were wealthy, and that they indulged in luxuriousness and profligacy.

There is much figurative language in the Pentateuch, and in the book of Psalms; but by a diligent consideration of the connexion of such language, and by the application of the above rules, it may generally be understood.

In the New Testament the chief figure of speech is that of parable. The reason why Christ spoke to the Jews in parables was, their obstinate and wilful rejection of his doctrine. They had a *natural* fitness to receive that doctrine; but their *moral* aversion to it was such, that had he spoken to them in plain terms, they would not have heard him at all, and therefore he took the advantage of this method of instruction, which, notwithstanding its obscurity, is sufficiently plain to those who desire to understand.

Many events were to take place which it was needful for him to foretel, but which in the ordinary course of things, would have been prevented, had he not adopted this method. Therefore we, as well as his immediate disciples to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, have great cause to be thankful that he condescended to teach in this way.

To understand a parable,

1. We must attend to the event or circumstance that gave occasion to it ; this will often prove as a key to unlock its whole meaning. For instance, the parable of the prodigal son. Previously to delivering it, Christ had been discoursing with publicans and sinners, at which the proud Pharisees had taken offence, considering *them* as unworthy the notice of any person of credit ; they therefore indulged an indignant temper towards him on that account. But he, with admirable ingenuity and address, reproved their invidious and haughty resentment, by this well-constructed and highly-finished parable ; in which he showed the impiety of their feeling on this account, since sinners, even the vilest, on returning to God, would be accepted by him. This appears to be the main scope of the parable : but a chief circumstance in its structure strongly reproved their pride ; their character is delineated in that of the eldest son, by which Christ plainly showed, that had they even been as righteous as they thought themselves, their conduct was unreasonable and improper.

2. We should observe the grand truth intended to be taught by it. If we suffer our mind to be diverted from *that*, and dwell upon its minute parts, the whole will thereby be involved in obscurity. It is the effect of the whole, and not of any single part, which is chiefly to be regarded. As in viewing a fine painting, if we fix our eyes on detached parts of it, without considering their relation to the whole, we lose the effect it would otherwise produce ; so to spend our time and attention on the drapery of a parable, which is evidently used to give it effect, is to lose sight of its principal subject. The ring and the robe in the parable just referred to ; and the money given to the host, the city of Jerusalem, and the town of Jericho, in that of the good Samaritan, are of this nature, and should not be dwelt upon as though they were designed to teach some important truths.

Great caution should be observed in reasoning from parables to doctrines. The principal or leading idea of *them* is sufficient ground on which to establish a doctrine, and may be designed for that purpose ; but this is not the case

with their detached parts. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus proves the doctrine of a separate state, both of the righteous and the wicked, or we must admit that our Lord gave countenance to a popular notion, having no foundation in truth, which would be highly derogatory to his character. Yet should we attempt to prove that there is compassion in hell, from the concern expressed by Dives for his brethren, we should attempt to raise a superstructure which the foundation cannot support. It is, however, lamentable to think, what multitudes of people have been imposed upon in this way; their imaginations have been amused, and their passions excited, at the expense of their understanding and judgment. Preachers have entertained them, perhaps for a whole hour, in explaining such mysteries as scarcely any but themselves could have discovered. They have understood what was never meant, and have delivered as sacred truth what was never so much as thought of. Their hearers, charmed and delighted, have concluded that they must be deeply instructed in the things of God. This evil can be cured only by scriptural knowledge; it should be the business therefore, even as it is the duty, of preachers and hearers to obtain this knowledge, for which we have great facilities, and not to make use of them incurs much culpability. Were all preachers of the gospel wise and judicious in this matter, it would be of eminent service to their hearers.

Before I close this chapter I shall offer a few miscellaneous observations.

1. The English title of the Holy Scriptures, namely, "the Old and New Testaments," is not very correct. A testament is a writing, by which, when properly executed, a man directs what shall be done with his property after his decease. There is but little similarity between this and the Scriptures. The word "covenant" would have been better. By the words, "*New Testament* and *first testament*," (Heb. ix. 15.) the Apostle distinguishes between the Jewish and Christian economies; the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, and the dispensation of the gospel. The moral law, which required perfect obedience, under the

penalty of death, and allowed of no mercy, cannot with propriety be called a testament. Nor is this word well adapted to express the idea of the gospel; for though its blessings are given through the death of Christ, it was not only necessary that he should die, but also that he should rise from the dead, in which there is a great dissimilarity between him and a testator. He is the mediator of the gospel economy, as Moses was of that of the law; but a testament does not need a mediator. To call Christ the mediator of the new covenant, would contain a reference to the Sinai covenant; it would imply that Moses was a type of him, and that the legal sacrifices prefigured his propitiation. This would be proper; and although we cannot alter the meaning of these terms, we may bear in mind the idea of covenants instead of that of testaments.

2. The word *Selah* occurs more than seventy times in the book of Psalms. This word has exercised the patience and labour of the learned, who, after all, have not been able to say with certainty what it means. It has been thought to intimate, that the passage where it occurs deserves more than a common degree of attention, which some think is confirmed by its being accompanied (Ps. ix. 16.) by the word *Higgaion*, which signifies meditation, or a subject fit for meditation. But we find this word in many places where there is nothing more particular than in some others, where it is not found, and therefore I do not see how this can be its meaning. It is more probable that it refers to the music to which the psalm was originally set, or that it gave some direction to the singers which does not concern us. We may therefore pass it over in reading, without injury to ourselves, or injustice to the word of God.

3. Some persons have wondered that there should be passages in the Scripture which seem to have been written in an angry, wrathful temper. These passages, however, only *seem* to have been so written. Most of them are found in the 69th and 109th psalms, and are not to be understood as execrations, but as prophetic declarations. Those in the 69th psalm should be read in the future tense, and not in the imperative mood. "Their table *shall* be made a snare,

their eyes *shall* be darkened, thou *wilt* pour out thine indignation," &c. Those in the 109th psalm, from ver. 6 to 20, may be understood as the language of David's enemies to him, and not as his language to them ; or they may refer to the enemies of the church, particularly to Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus ; and then they foretell the evils that would justly come upon him, and upon all who set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed. When any other of the sacred writers use words of the same kind, we are not to impute it to a wrathful temper, but to consider them as moved by a holy indignation against sin, and thereby led to use language stronger than usual, or as predicting what shall befall the enemies of God. (See the Exposition of the very excellent and judicious Mr. Matthew Henry on the 69th and 109th psalms, as well as those of Dr. Adam Clarke, and the Rev. Thomas Scott.)

There is an exception to this rule in the book of Jeremiah, (chap. xx. 14, 15.) in which that prophet curses the day wherein he was born, and the man who brought tidings to his father, saying, a man child is born unto thee. Some expositors have endeavoured to palliate these curses, by making them decorations to the poetical complaints of the prophet ; but there is no occasion for this. The spirit of prophecy did not exempt men from sinful infirmities. Such expressions are strong proofs that this great and good man was not entirely free from the influence of evil passions ; and he was suffered thus to express himself, to evince to us what imperfection there is in the best of men. He was tried with great difficulties ; and, instead of exercising that patience and submission under them which he ought to have done, he, like Job, in the third chapter of his book, gave way to improper feelings. This observation is not intended to give countenance to the exercise of evil passions ; yet we may admit it, without exceeding the degree of depravity sometimes found even in the renewed heart.

4. In the ninth chapter of Romans, and the third verse, the apostle says, " I could wish that myself were accursed

from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," which by no means signifies that he wished himself to be lost for ever to accomplish their salvation; this would have been contrary to that rectitude required by the moral law. It means, we apprehend, that he would willingly have submitted to be treated as one accursed, after the manner of Christ; to be excommunicated from the visible church; to be loaded with infamy and scandal; or even to be crucified as Christ was, if any personal sufferings of his might be of use to cause his brethren to receive the gospel, that they might thereby be saved. Some persons, however, enclose the first clause in a parenthesis, and translate it, (for I myself was wishing to be accursed from Christ), that is, (for I myself was in the same state of unregeneracy with them.)

5. The book of Canticles, or the Song of Solomon, has with many fallen into disrepute on account of the style in which it is written. But this allegorical book, which figuratively describes the union between Christ and the church, would never have found its way into the sacred canon, if the Jews had not thought it inspired; and they had as good an opportunity for judging on this question as learned men in our day. Their zeal and diligence concerning their sacred books, were such as would have prevented any alteration in their number. To this we may add, that if it had been improperly placed in the sacred canon, Christ and his apostles would have informed us that this was the case, and that it was not to be considered as part of God's word.

Objection. The language of this book is more suited to excite unhallowed passions than holy affections.

Answer 1. The same objection may be brought against other parts of the sacred volume, the same figures of speech, and the same images being used in them: and we might on this ground reject a great part of revelation. Should it be said that this applies to *parts* only of other books, while it is applicable to the *whole* of this, I reply, that I know no reason why a whole book may not be written in the same style in which parts of other books are written. Neither can there be any solid objection to this book which is not

equally applicable to those parts of other books that are written in the same style; and this would go far towards denying the claims of the sacred Scriptures to have been divinely inspired.

Dr. Good has justly observed, that “ the chief error of all translators of this book results from their having given verbal renderings of the Hebrew terms and idioms, which ought to have been translated equivalently; a method by which any language in the world, when interpreted into another, may not only convey a meaning altogether different from what the author intended, but may convert a term or phrase of perfect purity and delicacy in its original import, into another indelicate and unchaste;”—an observation of great importance, and well deserving the attentive consideration of those who exclude this book from the canon of Holy Scripture.

Answer 2. The same objection may be made to the system of nature. So far, therefore, from holding good against divine revelation, it furnishes an argument in its favour;—an argument derived from the analogy subsisting in this respect between the systems of nature and revelation. Is impurity objected to the latter? The same objection may be made in a variety of instances to the former, numerous objects in which excite the corrupt passions of the libertine. But who will dare, on this account, to arraign the purity of the Creator, or to deny the being of a God? Let us hear in what way the Deist will plead against the Atheist in behalf of the system of nature; in the same way we can plead against him in behalf of revelation. There is, as bishop Butler has most ably shown, an analogy between them, which proves that both have proceeded from the same God. This analogy furnishes answers to other objections that have been brought against the truth of the sacred writings. And as nature holds out arguments, taken from this analogy, in proof of the truth of revelation; so she also defends her, by an answer drawn from the same source, from the charge of impurity. The proper answer to both the Deist and the Atheist is this;—there is no real impurity either in the works or the word of God—

the only impurity is in the depraved heart of man. The corrupt passions of the sensualist are inflamed by words and things which do not produce that effect upon a pure and well-regulated mind. The most irrelative objects and expressions excite and inflame his corrupt passions, whilst no part of nature or of the word of God produces that effect on the breast where purity and innocence reside. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled." (Tit. i. 15.)

It is to be lamented that many persons, in attempting to explain this book, have indulged in a method of spiritualizing beyond due bounds, and have said much more than they could prove. When it is preached from, great prudence and sobriety should be observed, lest we indulge the illusions of imagination, rather than discover a judicious mind. Young ministers especially should be careful how they approach this very difficult part of divine truth, and should be sure, before they preach from any passage in it, that at least they know the meaning of the passage.

By the contents of this chapter we perceive, that if we would understand the word of God in any tolerable degree, we must exercise our thoughts upon it, compare one passage with another, and draw such inferences as the plain meaning will warrant. This is no more than what might be expected as necessary in a revelation from God to intelligent beings. We exercise our minds on temporal subjects, and think ourselves justified in so doing; but spiritual subjects are much more worthy of our attention. For God to give us either the blessings of time, or those of eternity, without the exertion of our powers, would be injurious. He has, therefore, acted differently, and we ought to adore his wisdom. Had his word been designed for persons destitute of faculties like ours, no doubt it would have been adapted to them; but it is designed for us: we should, therefore, use our best endeavours to understand it. If we feel our ignorance, we are encouraged to pray to him for instruction; he will hear our prayer, and by his Holy Spirit will make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

CHAP. XIV.

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF ENGLISH VERSIONS
OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The word "Scripture" is of the same import with "writing," and signifies any thing which is written. It is now generally used to denote the Old and New Testaments, sometimes called the Canonical Scriptures. The HOLY SCRIPTURES are called Scriptures by way of eminence, because they are the most important of all writings, and were written by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. They are called HOLY, on account of the doctrines they teach concerning God and religion; and *Canonical*, because when their authenticity was ascertained, their names were inserted in the ecclesiastical canons, to distinguish them from other books which did not contain sufficient evidence of their inspiration, and which were, therefore, called *Apocryphal*. The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice. By them we should judge of true religion, and by them also we ourselves shall be judged at the last day. The books called the Apocrypha, frequently bound up with Bibles of a large size, have no claim to divine authority, and ought not to have a place among those books which were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

"In the early ages of the Christian church, when copies and translations of the inspired writings were multiplied in all parts of the then known world, other religious books of the Jews, written in the style of Scripture, were received with reverence, and obtained a dubious authority in places where the Hebrew canon was unknown. Many spurious books were hereupon produced, under the names of prophets and apostles, some of which were heretical and pernicious.

To counteract the danger arising from hence, the fathers of the church were careful, not only in pointing out what books were inspired, but also in separating, among uninspired works, those compositions which were puerile or unsound, from those that were considered as instructive. Hence arose a threefold division, of which Ruffinus, who was contemporary with Jerome, A. D. 385, gives the following account. After enumerating (1.) the canonical books, he adds, "Yet it should be known that there are other books, which the ancient fathers did not call canonical; but (2.) Ecclesiastical, such as the 'Wisdom of Solomon,' and the 'Son of Sirach,' which book is known among the ancients by the general appellation of 'Ecclesiasticus,' that name not describing the author, but the species of writing. Of the same class are Tobit, and Judith, and the Maccabees; and, in connexion with the New Testament, the Pastor of Hermas, &c. All such they were accustomed to read in the churches, though not to produce for the establishment of matters of faith. Other writings they called Apocryphal, which were not to be read in churches. The term 'Apocryphal' has so far changed its meaning, that it is now used to designate the ecclesiastical books, while those to which it anciently referred are scarcely known, except to the learned. The books called 'Apocrypha,' and placed at the end of the Old Testament in our Bibles, all belonged to the second class. This triple distinction is constantly alluded to by the early Christian writers, though often overlooked when they are not speaking directly upon the canon." (Venn.)

Mr. Thomas H. Horne, in his Introduction to the critical study of the Scriptures, has not observed this threefold division, but speaks of the books of the Apocrypha, as bound with our Bibles, in the following manner:—"There is reason to believe that they were written for the most part by Alexandrian Jews, subsequently to the cessation of the prophetic spirit, though before the promulgation of the Gospel. Not one of their writers in direct terms advances a claim to inspiration, nor were these books received into the canon of Scripture by the Jewish church, and therefore

were not sanctioned by our Saviour. Neither he nor any of his apostles ever alluded to them, nor do either Philo or Josephus, who flourished in the first century, make any mention of them." Bishop Marsh, in his "Comparative View of the churches of England and of Rome," says, "Most of the books of the Apocrypha were Greek in their very origin, and consequently were incapable of admission into the Hebrew canon; and with respect to the few among them which may have been written in that kind of Hebrew which was spoken in latter times by the Jews of Palestine, it would have been quite inconsistent with the veneration of the Jews for their ancient Hebrew Scriptures, to have admitted whole books written in Chaldee, though they did not exclude the works either of Ezra or of Daniel on account of some parts of them being Chaldee." As, therefore, the books of the Apocrypha can by no means be properly considered as divine, they ought not to have a place in God's word, either between the Old and New Testaments as with us, or interspersed among other books as with the Papists. The advocates of the church of Rome affirm, that these books are inspired; but this, like many other of their affirmations, is intended to countenance their corrupt practices, and to prevent the people from discovering the fallacy of the arguments by which those practices are, at least in part, supported.

In these books are many strange and ridiculous stories, and by some able Protestant writers they are said to be a mixture of falsehood and impiety. It must, however, be admitted, that some of them contain maxims of wisdom and prudence, which in their import are very similar to the inspired Proverbs of Solomon. Dr. Doddridge, speaking of the Apocrypha, says, "We acknowledge these books to have been of considerable antiquity; and as some of them are very valuable, on account of the wise and pious sentiments they contain, so the historical facts and references to ancient customs in others of them make them well worthy an attentive perusal." He at the same time states the absurd things recorded in them, positively denies their inspiration, and remarks, that the insisting upon reading some

portion of them instead of lessons from Scripture in the daily offices of the church, was an arbitrary and cruel imposition in those who fixed the terms of conformity in England, in the year 1662. There is, however, in the church established by law in this country, an article expressly denying the inspiration of the books of the Apocrypha; and, light and knowledge having increased so much since the days of the Reformation, there is now reason to believe, that many worthy and excellent men of that church would be glad to get rid of the Apocrypha altogether from her service.

The Old and New Testaments were originally written in the Hebrew and Greek languages, translations from which have, by the good providence of God, been made, and preserved to the present time. These translations contain what God would have us to know, the doctrines we ought to believe, and the duties we should perform. If any man profess to teach the Christian religion, his instructions must be tried by these books, and received or rejected as they agree or disagree with them. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." But it may be said, As all denominations of Christians pretend to derive their doctrines from the sacred writings, how are the poor and the unlearned to know, amidst this diversity of opinions, what is right? This is a question of great importance, and has, we conceive, been asked by those who desired to know what is right, as well as by those who have made diversity of sentiment among Christians an argument against the divinity of revealed religion. Difficult, however, as this question is, we apprehend that a satisfactory answer may be given to it. Jesus Christ says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." A sincere willingness, and an earnest desire to do the will of God,—a humble heart, and a teachable disposition,—are the best preparatives for understanding the gospel of Christ. With these we shall be guided through all the mazes of uncertainty and controversy, to the knowledge of every truth connected with our present peace and future

happiness. None are given up to strong and destructive delusions, but such as hate the truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness. This is a great encouragement to an honest enquirer after the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning him. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves before him, and pray that he would grant us his Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

It may also be observed, that the language of Scripture is not so dark and intricate that its meaning cannot be understood by plain people. The above writer says, "I am more and more convinced, that the vulgar sense of the New Testament, that is, the sense in which an honest man of plain sense would take it on his first reading the original or any good translation, is almost every where the true general sense of any passage." The poor and the illiterate have, therefore, no reason to despair. Let them but acknowledge God in all their ways, and he will so direct their paths, that they shall not greatly err from his truth.

At the commencement of the Christian era, it is said that the Latin was not only the language of the western world, but was gradually supplanting the Greek as a general language. From the testimony of Augustine it appears, that the Latin church possessed a great number of versions of the Scriptures, made at the first introduction of Christianity, the authors of which were unknown; and that in the primitive times, as soon as any one found a Greek copy, and thought himself sufficiently versed in both languages, he attempted a translation of it. In the course of time this diversity of translations produced much confusion, parts of several versions being in some instances put together to form an entire composition, and marginal notes being inserted in the text. One of these translations, it is said, acquired more extensive circulation than the others, and, under the name of the *Itala*, or old *Italic*, was used for several ages, on account of its clearness and fidelity.

This version in the time of Jerome was received as canonical, and is by him termed the *Vulgate*, and sometimes the *Old*, in opposition to the *New Translation* undertaken by him. It is also remarked, that the exclusive adoption

of Jerome's new version throughout the western church, under the name of the Vulgate, rendered a multiplication of copies of it necessary ; that with them new errors were introduced ; and that various improvements were afterwards made. In 1573 several learned men united their endeavours, and printed what was called a corrected edition of the Vulgate, which was reprinted in 1580. The labours of these men not being approved by Sixtus V., he commanded a new revision of the Vulgate to be made with the utmost care. To this work he devoted much time and attention, and corrected it himself. This was printed at Rome in 1590. The council of Trent ordained, that it should be adopted throughout the papal church. It was, however, discovered to be incorrect, and Pope Clement VIII. caused it to be suppressed, and published another, which was called the Authentic Vulgate, in 1592. These different and varying editions of the Scriptures, published by men belonging to a church claiming infallibility, have not passed unnoticed by Protestant divines. They have animadverted upon them in such a manner as considerably to weaken the authority of the Romish church. One pope condemning and suppressing what his predecessor had corrected and published, is certainly a strange way of showing the infallibility of them both. But where was the common sense and reason, to say nothing about the religion, of the Papists themselves, not to see the weakness of pretending to that which the conduct of the popes so evidently contradicted ? The veil was upon their hearts ; their eyes were blinded.

Although the gospel is generally supposed to have been brought into England in the first century, it does not appear that its inhabitants had any translation of the Scriptures into their own language before the eighth century. It is said that about the year of our Lord 706, Adhelm, the first bishop of Sherborn, translated the Psalter into Saxon, and that, at his persuasion, Egbert or Eadfrid, bishop of Landisfarne, or Holy Island, soon after executed a Saxon version of the four Gospels.

Not many years after this, the venerable Bede translated the whole Bible into that language ; and there were also

other versions, either of the whole or of detached portions of the Scriptures, of a still later date; even the illustrious King Alfred, who died A.D. 900, undertook the translation of the book of Psalms. Had all our subsequent monarchs followed his example, the faithful historian could not have recorded the scenes of cruelty and bloodshed for conscience sake, which have disgraced our nation, and fixed an indelible stain upon some crowned heads. Alfred was not only a translator of a part of the sacred writings, but a truly great and good prince, ruling his subjects in the fear of God.

“ In those ages, however anxious professors of Christianity might be to possess the Scriptures, they laboured under great difficulty, and could scarcely obtain them at all. The publication of a version of them was not then what it is now, the emission of thousands of copies among mankind; it consisted in great measure in translators allowing others to transcribe their MSS. which required much time and labour; and, so long as the tedious process of copying them in writing was the only method that could be resorted to, they must have been multiplied very slowly. Before the invention of printing, MSS. were the only books in use, and as they bore very high prices, especially those that were voluminous, very few except the rich could afford to purchase them.” (Rev. T. H. Horne.)

When papal domination had risen to a great height, and its influence had spread over almost the whole church, its advocates thought it expedient, in order to preserve the orthodox faith from lawless interpretation, to keep the Scriptures from the common people. Accordingly the council of Thoulouse, in 1229, prohibited the laity from possessing them; and this prohibition was repeated on subsequent occasions. “ Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved.” The Romish church was full of the deeds of darkness, and revelation in the hands of the common people would have exposed their nefarious practices; it was therefore thought necessary to keep them in ignorance. What an awful proof of the depravity of human nature, and also

of the corrupt state of a church, when those who pretend to be the instructors of others, designedly keep from them the best means of instruction! Such men may shelter themselves under the pretext, that the Scriptures in the hands of the common people would lead to bad consequences; but the truth is, they are opposed to the Scriptures themselves. Blessed be God, the darkness of those times is considerably past, and the true light now shineth. The sacred writings are widely spread over the face of the earth, and divine truth is making its way into all nations.

One of the first English translations of the Bible was executed by John Wickliffe, about the year 1380. I do not know that this translation was printed before the year 1810, though MS. copies of it, long before that time, were placed in some of the public libraries. This reformer's translation of the New Testament was published in England about the year 1731. It is recorded of John Wickliffe, that he was not only a good divine, but that he was well skilled in the civil, in the canon, and also in the English law; and that to learning and ability he added the ornament of a grave and pious conduct. He died in his own parish of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, December 31, 1384. By a decree of the council of Constance, twenty-eight years afterwards, his voluminous writings were condemned to be burned; his bones, being dug up out of his grave, were burned at the same time, and their ashes were cast into the adjoining brook. Awful proof of impotent malignity!

The leaven of Wickliffe, however, was fermenting in this country, from his time to the days of Luther, whose exertions, and the importations of books from the continent, gave it additional diffusion, till at length many favourers of the reformed doctrine appeared in England. Among the first of these was William Tindale, in whose memory every lover of the Bible must feel deeply interested. He was born in Wales, and educated at Magdalene Hall, Oxford. There he read private lectures in divinity to some of the students in the hall, and also to some of the fellows of the adjoining college; and, on account of his learning and integrity, was advanced to a canonry of Christ's Church College, then newly founded by Cardinal

Wolsey. Having imbibed the opinions of Luther, he was involved in great troubles; but, in the midst of them all, here so-
lutely determined to translate the New Testament into the English language. The reason for this was, because he thought it impossible to instruct the people in the truth of God's word to any good effect unless it was laid before them in their own tongue. In this he judged rightly; the knowledge of God and religion, necessary to the salvation of the soul, must be acquired through the medium of words understood by them that hear. Correct, however, as this sentiment is, it had not been acted upon, except by a few individuals, for many ages. "Darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people."

Tindale, finding no opportunity of executing his pious intention in this country, fled for security to Antwerp in Flanders, where he lived by the assistance of Humphrey Monmouth, a wealthy citizen of London, who allowed him £10 yearly for his support. In this retreat he finished his great work, with the assistance of John Fry and William Roe; the former of whom was burned in Smithfield for heresy, July, 1552, and the latter suffered the same death on a similar accusation in Portugal. The first edition of this New Testament was printed in 1526, and consisted of 1500 copies, many of which were afterwards sent to England; at which time Tonstall was bishop of London, and Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor. These two powerful men, not comprehending of what important service the holy book might be to their countrymen, united, and employed their influence to destroy it. Archbishop Wareham also engaged in this deed of darkness; he with Tonstall issuing orders to have them all bought in and destroyed. It happened that one Augustin Packington, a mercer, was then at Antwerp, where Tonstall also was. Packington favoured Tindale, but did not discover his favour for him to the bishop, who, in his zeal for the destruction of this translation, intimated that he would gladly purchase all the copies of it for this very purpose. Packington, hearing this, said to him, "My Lord, I can do more in this matter than most merchants that be here, if it be your Lordship's

pleasure ; for I know the Dutchmen, and the strangers that have bought them of Tindale, and who have them to sell ; so that if it be your pleasure, I must disburse money to pay for them, or else I cannot have them, and so I will assure you to have every book of them that is printed and unsold. The bishop replied, “ Do your diligence, gentle master Packington ; get them for me, and I will pay whatever they cost, for I intend to burn them at St. Paul’s cross.” Packington went to Tindale, told him the whole matter, and bought of him all the copies of his New Testament that were then unsold. The bishop had the books, Packington had the thanks, and Tindale had the money, by the assistance of which he supported himself while he diligently corrected his translation, and caused it to be printed again ; after which they came, as the history informs us, thick and threefold into England. When the disappointed bishop perceived this, he sent for Packington, and said to him, “ How cometh this that there are so many Testaments abroad ? You promised me that you would buy them all.” Packington answered, “ Surely I bought all that were to be had, but I perceive they have printed more since ; I see it will never be better as long as they have letters and stamps, wherefore you had better buy the stamps, and then you will be sure.” At which the bishop is said to have smiled, and there the matter ended. The New Testaments bought by Tonstall, with others that could be obtained, were committed to the flames at St. Paul’s cross ; but this had a hateful appearance to the common people, and was generally called burning the word of God. It was also thought, that there must be an opposition between the New Testament and those who treated it with such indignity. Penance was enjoined on Thomas Patmore, and on John Tindale, (the translator’s brother,) on suspicion of importing and concealing these New Testaments. Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor, adjudged, “ That they should ride with their faces towards the tails of their horses, having papers on their heads, and the New Testament, and other books, which they were supposed to have dispersed, hung about their cloaks, and that

at the standard at Cheapside they should throw them into the fire prepared for that purpose, and afterwards be fined at the king's pleasure." Sir Thomas More, having about this time several persons in prison accused of heresy, and waiting for execution, offered to compound with one of them, named George Constantine, for his life, upon the easy terms of discovering who they were in London that maintained Tindale beyond the sea. After the man had got as good a security for his life as the chancellor could give him, he told him that it was the bishop of London who maintained him, by purchasing his New Testaments. The chancellor smiled, and said he believed it to be true; thus the poor man's life was saved. The first two impressions of this New Testament consisted of 5000 copies, and were sold by the Dutch booksellers at the rate of thirteen pence each, or three hundred for £16. 5s. but in England they sold for half-a-crown each. In the mean time Tindale was busy in translating the five books of Moses from the Hebrew, which he published at Marlborow, in the land of Hesse, A.D. 1530. He also printed a third edition of the New Testament, and a fourth; which last consisted of 2000 copies, and which was followed by a fifth and a sixth. He printed also a second edition of the Pentateuch, and a translation of the book of Jonah. This was all he lived to accomplish. These labours of Tindale, however, illustrate the inspired declaration, that God taketh the wise in their own craftiness. The deep-laid schemes of wicked men have often been overruled for the promotion of God's cause; his word has grown and multiplied through those very means which they have taken to suppress it. From the registers of London it appears, that when the bishops, and Sir Thomas More, had a poor man to be examined before them, who had been at Antwerp, they strictly questioned him in all things belonging to Tindale, where and with whom he lodged, whereabouts in the town the house stood, what was his stature, in what apparel he was clothed, and where he resorted. Tindale lodged at Antwerp, in the house of one Thomas Pointz, an Englishman, who kept there a house for English merchants. In this house

there was a man who appeared like a gentleman, and who had a servant with him; but why he came, or for what purpose he was sent thither, nobody could tell. Tindale was frequently invited to dine and sup with the merchants in this house, by which means this person, whose name was Henry Phillips, became acquainted with him. This man appears to have been sent thither by persons in England, on purpose to discover and betray Tindale. He told his object to Pointz, in whose house he lodged, who seems to have fallen in with the wicked project. Phillips afterwards went to Brussels, and brought with him from thence to Antwerp several officers, by whom Tindale was apprehended, put into prison, and condemned as a heretic, by virtue of the emperor's decree, made in the assembly of Augsburg; which decree, there is but little reason to doubt, was made in consequence of the influence of Tindale's enemies in England. When he was brought to the place of execution, he was tied to the stake, then strangled by the hangman, and afterwards his body was consumed. At the stake he cried out with a fervent zeal and loud voice, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!" Thus fell the excellent, venerable, and illustrious William Tindale. Who can doubt that a righteous God marked, with his displeasure, the men who planned and executed so diabolical a scheme? "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, Lord, holy, and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. viii. 9, 10.) It is worthy of being remarked, that Tonstall died in prison, for the defence of the Romish faith, at the advanced age of 84 years, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, A.D. 1559. Thus fell Tonstall, to rise no more till the great day of account at the bar of the Almighty. Sir Thomas More was beheaded by order of Henry VIII. because he would not acknowledge him to be the head of the church in England. His sentence was, "We command that Sir Thomas More, sometime Knight, be carried

back to the place from whence he came, and from thence be drawn through the city to the public place of execution, there to be hanged till he be half dead, then to be cut down, his bowels presently to be taken out and burned, his head cut off, and his body to be quartered into four parts, and the body and head to be set up where the king shall appoint. So Lord have mercy upon you." This sentence was afterwards changed into beheading, according to the ancient custom of England for men of high birth. Accordingly he was beheaded July 6, 1535. It is not here intended to assert that these men were brought into such uncomfortable circumstances, solely as the reward of their opposition to Tindale's translation of the New Testament; but we read of one who said, "Three-score and ten kings having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me." (Judges i. 7.) Jesus Christ also says, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. viii. 2.) Men may often read their sin in their punishment; for though the Almighty reserves the heaviest of his wrath to the day when he will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel, yet he often brings down the wickedness of the wicked upon their own heads, even in the present world.

In 1533 the authority of the pope was abolished in England, and Henry VIII. was declared head of the church. In his heart he was no friend to the Lutheran reformation, nor does he appear to have sought the spiritual good of his subjects; yet, perceiving that it was impossible to keep what were called heretical translations of the Scriptures out of the hands of the common people, he thought it necessary to have an English version of them. Cranmer, being advanced to the see of Canterbury that same year, was disposed to forward this object; and the two houses of convocation deputed his grace to petition his majesty to give orders to that effect. The king, it is said, enjoined it, and the archbishop commenced the undertaking; but it is thought that in consequence of the opposition made to it by the Romish clergy, it failed. However, what could

not be accomplished by the union of royal and episcopal influence, was effected by individual exertion. In 1535 the whole Bible was published in England by Miles Coverdale. He dedicated it to the king, and it is thought to have been printed at Zurich. Coverdale was in exile, but he translated those parts of the Old Testament which had been left untranslated by Tindale, and as it seems made his own work complete by what Tindale had done; for those parts of this Bible which he did not translate, are said to be substantially the same with Tindale's version.

Here we may contrast the craft and wickedness of popery with the goodness of God. We may perceive the influence the Romish clergy had in this country, even after popery was formally abolished; and we cannot help observing and admiring the indefatigable perseverance of those worthy persons, whose hearts were so much set upon giving to their countrymen the Holy Scriptures in their own tongue. Coverdale was a native of Yorkshire, and an Augustine monk. Having embraced the doctrines of the Reformation, and being permitted to return to England, he became almoner to Catharine Parr, the last wife of Henry VIII. In the reign of Edward he was promoted to the bishopric of Exeter, but, on the change which took place upon Mary's accession, he was deprived of his see, and thrown into prison; out of which he was released, at the earnest request of the king of Denmark, and, as a very great favour, was permitted to go into banishment. Soon after the accession of Elizabeth to the throne he returned from his exile, but would not accept of his bishopric, because of his attachment to the principles of the Puritans. Grindal, bishop of London, gave him the small living of St. Magnus, near London Bridge; but, not complying with the terms of conformity then required, he was deprived of his living, lost the favour of the government, and died in indigence. It is said that he was a man of great piety, knowledge of the Scriptures, and diligence in preaching. In his history we see a picture of the mutability of human affairs. It seems probable, from Coverdale's dedication to his Bible, that the people were permitted to read it. In 1536 a royal in-

junction was issued to the clergy to provide a copy of the Bible in English, to lie in the choir of every church. This was equal to an express approbation of this version, as there was no other Bible then in the country. In 1537 this Bible, revised by Thomas Matthews, was set forth by the king's most gracious licence. This was the first public declaration of the royal approbation of the Scriptures in our native language. When this Bible was finished, and presented to Henry, he gave it to bishop Gardiner and some others to examine. They kept it so long that the king at length called for it. When they delivered to him the book, he demanded their opinion of the translation. They answered, that there were many faults in it. "Well," says the king, "but are there any heresies contained in it?" They replied, "there were none that they could find." "If there be no heresies," said Henry, "then in God's name let it go abroad among our people." Strype says, it was wonderful to see with what joy this book of God was received; not only by the learned, and those that were noted for being lovers of the Reformation, but generally all over England among the vulgar and common people; and with what greediness it was read, and what resort there was to the places where the reading of it was. Every one that could, bought the book, and leisurely read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not read it themselves; and many elderly people learned to read on purpose that they might have the pleasure of reading it.

We are also told, that in this year an edition of the English Bible was printed abroad, which was called Matthews's Bible; but this name was fictitious, the real author, or rather the promoter of its publication, being the excellent John Rogers, the proto-martyr under Queen Mary's reign, who was burned in Smithfield, February 4, 1555. Afterwards a resolution was taken by certain individuals to revise this edition, and to print it again without the prologues or annotations, which seem to have accompanied the former edition; but a great offence was taken at this, it being pretended that it contained matters heretical, scandalous, and defamatory. Grafton and Whitchurch were employed to

print it; and, there being at that time better printers and paper in France than could be obtained in England, they procured the king's letters to the French king for liberty to print it at Paris; but when they had almost finished their design, by an order of the inquisition they were forbidden, under canonical pains, to proceed; and being carried before the inquisition, they were charged with heresy. The Englishmen who were there to correct the press, were, it is said, all obliged to flee, and their books were confiscated. But, by the encouragement of Lord Cromwell, some of the Englishmen returned to Paris, and got the presses, letters, and printing servants, and brought them to London, where they resumed the work, which was finished and published.

It has often happened that those who could scarcely agree in any thing else, have united their influence to persecute the church of God. The Moabites and Ammonites, who were enemies among themselves, united in persecuting Israel. Pilate and Herod were opposed to each other, "at enmity between themselves;" yet in the crucifixion of Christ they were as one, and by it were made friends. The bishops of England, and the leaders of the court of the inquisition in France, might not in all points be in unison, yet they agreed to prevent, as far as they could, the publication of the sacred writings; both acted as if the maxim, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," were a proper rule of conduct; but the goodness of God overcame their abominable machinations, and at length gave his word to the people of this country in their own language. No thanks, however, to these ghostly guides. Cranmer presented this Bible to Lord Cromwell, desiring his intercession with the king that it might be purchased and used by all persons.

In the year 1540, or thereabouts, an injunction was published by royal authority, ordering the clergy to provide, before the next feast of All Saints, one of these Bibles, and to set it up in some convenient place in their churches, where their parishioners might commodiously resort to it. This order, it is said, was very partially and reluctantly

obeyed ; for many churches were without one, and in others it was placed where poor men durst not presume to go to read it. The price of this Bible was fixed by royal authority at ten shillings unbound, and at twelve shillings well bound and clasped.

In the convocation which met in February, 1542, the archbishop, in the king's name, required the bishops and clergy to revise the translation of the New Testament ; but this did not succeed. On the contrary, a design was conceived by these lovers of darkness to banish the translation already made. Cranmer, perceiving the desire of these secret friends of popery, obtained the king's consent to refer the matter of translating the Bible afresh, or of correcting the old translation, to the two universities ; but all the bishops protested against it, and their influence prevailed. The Romish party also prevailed in parliament, and Tindale's Bible was condemned by law ; but the people were allowed to read other translations, provided the annotations and preambles were expunged. This grant was subject to various and degrading restrictions. No woman, in poor or low circumstances of life, no artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving-men, husbandmen, or labourers, were permitted by law to read the New Testament. Noblemen or gentlemen might read it in their houses, orchards, or gardens, quietly, and without disturbance of good order. Ladies of good quality also might read it to themselves alone, but not to others. This seems to say, that in those days it was imagined that the common people had no souls, either to be saved or lost ; or that if they had, those who made this law cared nothing at all what became of them. Mitigations of this ungodly law were obtained by Cranmer with great difficulty ; but it is probable that he could not have obtained them at all, had not the king been going on an expedition against France, and therefore thought it prudent to leave his subjects as easy and contented in his absence as he could. Such was the despotism and intolerance of Henry VIII., although he had but a few years before determined "that the people should be nursed up in Christ by the Bible." The truth is, that he became

nearly as much of a pope at home, as his holiness was at Rome; and perhaps exercised more tyranny and despotism over his subjects than even the pope himself would have done, had they remained subject to his authority. It matters not to whom we are obedient in spiritual things, if it be to a creature; consciences and souls were made for God, to yield obedience to him, and to him only. There are, however, degrees in the evil of arrogating this spiritual power. For any man to assume what he acknowledges does not belong to him, is more wicked than if he thought he was exercising a power to which he had some claim, however despotic that power, or however groundless that claim. But of all popes, either at Rome, in France, or in England, popes amongst Protestant Dissenters would be the most inconsistent and detestable: it becomes them, therefore, to beware of the very least approach towards spiritual domination.

In 1546, the last year of this king's reign, he prohibited the reading or possessing the translations either of Wickliffe, Tindale, or Coverdale, and also forbade the use of any other translation of the Scriptures than what was allowed by parliament. Some historians suppose, that this was owing to the disturbances of the people among themselves respecting religion; but it is more probable that it was attributable to the increasing strength of the Romish faction, and to the decrease of the king's opposition to the pope. Zeal for the Reformation he could not lose, because, if we may judge from his conduct, he never had it.

In this king appears to have been exemplified that great distinction, so often forgotten, between zeal for what *we* approve, and zeal for what *God* approves. Henry was zealous against popery, but he tried to accomplish his own ends—not God's will.

Soon after the accession of King Edward to the throne, January 28, 1546, the severe statute of Henry, respecting reading the Bible, was repealed, and a royal injunction published, that not only the whole English Bible should be placed in churches, but also the paraphrase of Erasmus in English, to the end of the four evangelists. It was like-

wise ordered that every parson, vicar, curate, chantry, priest, or stipendiary, being under the degree of a bachelor of divinity, should have of *his own* the New Testament, both in Latin and English, with the paraphrase of Erasmus upon it, and that the bishops in their synods or visitations should examine how they had profited in the study of the Holy Scriptures. During the reign of this king, which was not quite seven years and six months, eleven impressions of the whole English Bible are said to have been published, with six of the New Testament, to which may be added the English translation of the New Testament, paraphrased by Erasmus.

When Queen Elizabeth passed through London from the Tower to her coronation, a pageant was erected in Cheapside, which represented Time coming out of a cave, and leading a person clothed in white silk, who represented Truth, her daughter. Truth had an English Bible in her hand; she addressed the queen, and presented her with the book; the queen kissed it, held it in her hands, laid it on her breast, thanked the city for their present, and promised that she would often and diligently read it.

In 1560 the whole Bible was printed at Geneva by Rowland Harte; some of the English refugees continuing in that city solely for that purpose. To this was prefixed an epistle dedicatory to the queen, and another epistle, by way of preface, to their brethren in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Of this translation, which was principally used in private families, on account of the notes annexed to it, more than thirty editions, in different sizes, are said to have been printed, chiefly by royal authority. Editions of it were likewise printed at Geneva, Edinburgh, and Amsterdam. Some learned men speak highly of this copy of the English Scriptures, and do not hesitate to declare, that it is at least equal to that of King James's translators.

In this reign Archbishop Parker was resolved to carry into execution what Cranmer in his day had laboured in vain to accomplish, namely, a translation of the Scriptures into the English language, chiefly under the influence of the dignitaries of the English church. Distinct portions of

the Bible were allotted to men of learning and abilities, eight of whom were bishops, on which account it was called 'the Bishops' Bible.' So highly pleased was this good prelate when he saw an end put to this great work, that he seemed to be in the same spirit with good old Simeon, using his very words, *Lord, now lettest thou, &c.*

In the convocation of the province of Canterbury, which met April 3, 1571, a canon was made enjoining the churchwardens to "see that the Holy Bible be in every church in the largest volume, such as was then lately imprinted in London." It was likewise ordered that "every archbishop and bishop, every dean and chief residentiary, and every archdeacon, should have one of these Bibles in their cathedrals and families." The editions of it were printed chiefly in folio and quarto, as though it were principally intended to be used in churches.

The Romanists, finding that it was impossible to keep the English Bible out of the hands of the common people, were now resolved to have an English translation of their own making. Accordingly, in 1582, they printed at Rheims an English New Testament in quarto; but they are charged with retaining many Greek and Latin words, in order to keep the people in darkness.

On the 24th of March, 1602, James I. succeeded to the throne of England. He was soon petitioned by the Puritans on the subject of ecclesiastical affairs; and, being himself disposed to begin his reign by settling the doctrine and discipline of the church, he appointed by proclamation, January 12, 1603, a conference to be held at Hampton Court, between several bishops and deans, and the leaders of the Puritans. On the second day of this conference, Dr. Reynolds, the speaker of the Puritans, moved his majesty that a new translation of the Bible might be undertaken, because those which were extant were not answerable to the truth of the original. The king answered Dr. Reynolds, that he considered the Geneva translation as the worst. This translation, it is said, was not so favourable to what James denominated *Kingcraft*, as he wished, and that this was the true secret of his disapprobation of it.

In consequence of this request, however, fifty-four translators, divided into six companies, were appointed for the accomplishment of this important work. It was begun in 1607, and completed in 1611. "This translation was corrected, and many parallel texts added, in 1683, by Dr. Scat-tergood and Dr. Lloyd, Bishop of London, and afterwards by Dr. Paris at Cambridge; but the most thorough revision was made by Dr. Blayney, in the year 1769, under the direction of the vice-chancellor and delegates of the university of Oxford, in which, first, the punctuation, it is said, was thoroughly revised; secondly, the words printed in Italics were examined and corrected by Hebrew and Greek originals; thirdly, the proper names, to the etymology of which allusions are made in the text, were translated and entered in the margin; fourthly, the heads of the chapters and running titles were corrected; fifthly, some material errors in the chronology were rectified; and finally, the marginal references were re-examined, corrected, and greatly enlarged. Copies of this version are said to be the most correct copies of the present authorized version." (Dr. A. Clarke.)

Originally, the text of the Old Testament is said to have been written without any *breaks or divisions* into chapters, verses, or even words, but to have been written, according to the ancient manner, as one continued word. There was indeed a general division of the sacred books possessed by the Jews, into the law, the prophets, and the psalms (See Luke xxiv); the last of which appear to have been distinguished from each other; for Paul, in his sermon at Antioch, quotes the *second* psalm. As to the rest of the sacred writings, the division of them into chapters and verses, as at present, was unknown to the ancients. The author of part of this useful invention was a Dominican monk, named Hugo de Sancto Caro, who was afterwards raised to the dignity of a cardinal. This man, who flourished about the year 1240, and died in 1262, had laboured hard in the study of the Holy Scriptures, and had written a commentary upon the whole of them. This work convinced him of the necessity of a Concordance to them. He therefore projected

a scheme for accomplishing this, and forthwith set a great number of monks of his own order to collect the words of Scripture, and to arrange them in their proper places under every letter of the alphabet; and by their help he soon effected his design, and made the first Concordance that was ever seen of the Holy Scriptures. The design of this work being for the more easily finding any passage or word in the sacred writings, the cardinal found it necessary to divide the books into sections, and these again into smaller divisions, that he might the better make his references, and also point out where the words and passages were to be found. These sections are the chapters into which the Bible has ever since been divided. But the subdivisions of chapters into verses did not take place till after his time. Hugo's way of subdividing chapters was by the letters A. B. C. D. E. F. G. placed in the margin at equal distances from each other, as the chapters were longer or shorter. In long chapters all these seven letters were used; in short ones, as many as were required. About the year 1430 a famous Jewish Rabbi, named Isaac Nathan, became acquainted with Hugo's Concordance to the Latin Bible, and perceiving its great usefulness, immediately set about making such a one to the Hebrew Bible for the use of the Jews. He followed Hugo in his division of the Scriptural books into chapters, but improved upon his plan, by affixing numerical letters in the margin at every fifth verse,—a division into verses, without numerical letters, already subsisting, which division is supposed to have been made by Ezra, or soon after his time. Athias, a Jew of Amsterdam, in two editions of the Bible which he printed in that city, varied from this method in two particulars. First, he introduced the use of figures; and secondly, he placed them at the intermediate verses, continuing as formerly the ancient numerical letter at every fifth verse. Before this persons were obliged to number from every fifth verse to find any intermediate passage between that and the next fifth. Athias's method approving itself to the readers of the Bible in general, a Latin Bible, with the chapters divided into verses in the same way, was soon after published; since which time all

persons that have published Concordances, as well as other writers on the Scriptures, have referred to them by the number of the chapter and verse according to this division : thus the Jews borrowed the division of their sacred books into chapters from the Christians, and the Christians that of numbering the verses of the Old Testament from the Jews, by which means the present editions of the Scriptures are much more convenient for common use than they otherwise could have been.

The division of verses used in the New Testament, though in some sort an imitation of what had been done by Ezra, or some person who lived soon after him, in the Old Testament, is more modern. Robert Stephens was the first person who used it, in an edition of the New Testament published in the year 1551. This division of the Holy Scriptures into chapters and verses, and the quoting of all passages in them by the numbers of both, has every where in these western parts grown into use, and has been followed in all Latin and Greek Bibles, and in all that have been printed in any of the modern languages. It must however be acknowledged, that while this division affords a great facility in referring to particular passages, it has its disadvantages. No person can read the sacred oracles with attention, without perceiving that many parts are severed which ought to be united ; and also that in some instances, where a division ought to have been made, it is not made.

Whether any points or stops were used by the Apostles, for marking the sense of their writings, is a question that has been much agitated, and which cannot now be settled : it is probable they would use such points or marks as were customary at that period, and we can hardly imagine that the writers of those times had nothing of this kind in use among them. Be this as it may, the majority of the points or stops now in use are thought to be but of modern date. It is observed by the learned, that the comma was invented in the eighth century ; that our present system of punctuation was generally adopted about the ninth century ; and that its perfection was gradual.

The inscriptions, or titles of the various books of the New Testament, are not of divine authority, but were sub-

sequently added in order to distinguish one book from another when the canon was formed; they must therefore be of great antiquity. The subscriptions annexed to the Epistles are acknowledged to be spurious, and therefore nothing certain can be inferred from them as to the place where they were written. Those of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians make them to have been written at Athens, whereas it is believed they were written at Corinth. The subscription to the first epistle to the Corinthians states that it was written at Philippi, notwithstanding the Apostle informs them (chap. xvi. 8,) that he would tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost, and begins his salutations in that epistle by saying to the Corinthian Christians, xvi. 19. "The churches of Asia salute you;"—an evident indication that he himself was in Asia at the time. Again: according to the subscription, the epistle to the Galatians was written from Rome; but, in the epistle itself, the Apostle expresses his surprise (i. 6.) that they were *so soon* removed from him that called them. His journey to Rome was ten years posterior to the conversion of the Galatians; neither is there any allusion in this epistle to his being a prisoner at Rome, which was his usual custom in epistles written from that city. From these and other considerations, we lay no stress on these subscriptions, but pass them over as of no importance.

After all the care and pains that have been taken to give us a correct copy of the sacred Scriptures in the English language, most learned men admit that there are mistranslations in our version, and that the words printed in italic characters to fill up the sense, for which there are no words in the original languages, are in some places improperly chosen. A mere English reader may observe, that in some instances the words in italics are unnecessary, and weaken the sense; whilst in others, where some suppletory words were necessary, different ones might have been selected, which would have agreed better with the general sense of the passage. We are, therefore, not to imagine that every word, as it now stands in the authorized version of the English Bible, is the very same that was originally dictated by the Spirit of God. This would involve the necessity of the

inspiration of all those who at any time were employed in translating, transcribing, or printing it, which no one ought to suppose. The providential goodness of God, however, in superintending his word, cannot be denied ; without this, it would have been very different from what it now is.

There are also in the sacred writings certain words and phrases that, by the lapse of time and the gradual change of language, have either become obsolete, or are materially altered in their signification ; which, were a new version to be made, might be suppressed and modern ones substituted. Instances of this are to be found in Isaiah xliii. 13. "I will work, and who shall let it ?" and in 1 Thess. iv. 15. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not *prevent* them which are asleep." In the former of these passages the word *let* is obviously used in the sense of hindering, in which sense it is now nearly obsolete : in the latter, the word *prevent*, which now means to hinder, is used in the sense of going before ; "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not *anticipate*, or go to glory before, them which are asleep." Yet in most of these instances the words are generally understood, and some of them have obtained a kind of sanctity from being found in the Bible. There is therefore no reason to fear that persons should be led into any material error through the want of more modern words in the sacred writings.

The highest eulogiums have been passed upon our translation of the Scriptures. If there be any confidence to be placed in men of respectable character, of great learning and piety, and of various denominations in religion, it will bear a comparison, with any translation of them in the world. It has stood the test of criticism ; and though there are many things in it which the most scrupulous and tenacious of its excellency must wish to see altered, yet there is comparatively but little, when all things are taken into the account, that deserves any thing like severe censure. Mr. Bellamy has attempted to give us a new translation of the Bible into the English language ; but in the opinion of learned men he has greatly failed, and has displayed the vanity of his mind in imagining himself capable of doing that for which he is

by no means competent. And were any other person to give us another translation of the Scriptures, he would doubtless fail in many respects; or if a new translation were made by the most learned men in any one religious denomination, those of another denomination would not approve of it; and were a union formed of the most learned men in all denominations for this purpose, they might not agree respecting it among themselves. As to a new *authorized* translation, therefore, we had better keep as we are; if a revision of the present translation could be obtained under the direction of wise and prudent men, it would be sufficient.

I shall here add a few testimonies respecting our translation from men of approved learning and fidelity.

1. Doddridge. "On a diligent comparison of our translation with the original, we find that of the New Testament, and I may add of the Old, in the main, faithful and judicious. You know indeed that we do not scruple on some occasions to animadvert upon it, but you know also that these remarks affect not the fundamentals of religion, and seldom reach farther than the beauty of a figure, or at most the connexion of an argument."

2. E. W. Whitaker. "Had King James's Bible been a negligent and ill-executed translation, it would have been impossible for its reputation to be preserved for so long a period, especially when we consider the great number of religious parties which have appeared in this country since the English church produced that translation. Those sects have never supplied its place by a new one; individuals have not succeeded in their endeavours to supersede it; and the result of all attempts has uniformly been an accession of reputation to the Old Bible from its comparison with these incomplete productions."

3. Dr. Chalmers. "The great bulk of Christians have no access to the Bible in the original languages, but they may have access to the common translation, and they may be satisfied that it is a good one from the concurrent testimony among the different sectaries of this country."

4. J. J. Gurney. "I wish to take the present opportu-

nity of expressing my conviction, that, for the most important practical purposes, the common English version of the Bible may be understood with sufficient precision, without the aid of the critic or the annotator."

5. Eclectic Review. "The greatest deformities in our English version arise from a too literal rendering of idiomatic phrases, by which either no meaning at all, or an incorrect one, is conveyed to the English reader. Yet so natural is the style of this version, except where the obscurity of the passage has compelled the translator to be literal; or at least so naturalized has it become to our minds, that we almost forget its foreign extraction, and are ready to look upon the Bible as an English work." (June, 1824. p. 544.)

6. Dr Adam Clarke. "Those who have compared most of the European translations with the originals, have not scrupled to say, that the English translation of the Bible, made under the direction of King James the First, is the most accurate and faithful of the whole. Nor is this its only praise. The translators have seized the very spirit and soul of the originals, and expressed this almost every where with pathos and energy. Besides, our translators have made their translation the standard of our language. The English language in their day was not equal to such a work; but God enabled them to stand as upon Mount Sinai, to use the words of a learned friend, and crane up their country's language to the dignity of the originals, so that the English Bible is, with very few exceptions, the standard of the purity and excellence of the English tongue."

To these testimonies many more might be added from men fully competent to judge of this matter, whose religion and learning leave us no room to think they would impose upon us. We cannot, therefore, but feel indignant at those pedants, who, because they have obtained a little knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written, are frequently finding fault with the common translation, as if they were able to make one far superior. These smatterers in learning often display their fragments of literature, as if they were the only men of wisdom and erudition; the pompous parade of what they

never possessed, has in some instances led the unwary to form opinions of the word of God injurious to their present peace, and to their future happiness ; and scepticism and infidelity have been greatly encouraged by their vain boastings. Truly learned men would not be guilty of conduct so derogatory to the sacred writings, and so injurious to the souls of men. There have also been individuals, who, without any knowledge of the originals, or even a competent understanding of their own language, have had the folly and weakness to find fault with the translation of the Bible : this has rendered them despicable in the eyes of sober and judicious persons, and has justly exposed them to the most severe reprehension.

In reviewing this short account of the English versions of the Bible, we cannot but observe,

I. That we are greatly indebted to those great and learned men, John Wickliffe and William Tindale. Many have done nobly in this good work, but they excelled them all. How little did these servants of God apprehend what would be the result of their labours, while they patiently pursued them ! A work was to be done which in time would give a fatal blow to the powers of darkness ; instruments, therefore, must be raised up to perform this work. He who chooses and qualifies his servants for what he designs them to accomplish, enabled these worthy men, in the midst of great difficulty, to do that which has been so useful to mankind. Whether Tindale derived assistance from Wickliffe's translation, we cannot tell ; possibly he might. If he did not, his own labour was the greater ; but, whether he did or not, he must have been a very laborious man. It is difficult to say which of these honourable worthies had the greatest mind. Those who have translated the Bible into the English language since the days of Tindale and Wickliffe, though great and learned men, are not to be compared with them. More or less they are all indebted to their translations ; our common version doubtless owes some of its excellencies to their labours.

2. The great reason we have to be thankful to God that we live in a day of so much religious light and civil liberty.

Other men laboured, and we have entered into their labours, and enjoy the free and quiet possession of what cost them very dear. Through their diligent and persevering studies, we read in our own tongue the wonderful works of God. Arts and sciences have also arrived at great perfection. The art of printing has afforded great facility to the spread of the sacred oracles, and to the increase of divine knowledge. Bibles, which before this invention were very dear, and could not be obtained unless by persons considerably above poverty, are now so cheap, that the poorest person may possess one. The poor and the rich are in this respect equally privileged; the cottage of the peasant, and the palace of the prince, are now blessed with that word which is able to make their inhabitants wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

3. The important and beneficial tendency of the things revealed in the sacred volume. In it we learn the power, glory, and majesty, of our great and ever-blessed Creator; the origin of this world, the rise of nations, and the history of kingdoms; the entrance of sin into the fair creation of God; the nature of sin, and of divine mercy to apostate man. It develops the nature of a future state, and sets before us the felicity of heaven, and the misery of hell. It almost draws the curtain from the invisible world, and shows us the thrones, crowns, and kingdoms, that the righteous enjoy in their state of immortality; and the wailing and gnashing of teeth among the wicked in the regions of woe, where hope never enters. The Bible is the glory of our land. With this in their hands, even our children, while they are yet young, may know more than all the sages of Greece and Rome knew without it. Our thanks should constantly ascend to heaven for this invaluable treasure. Gold and gems bear no comparison with it; it is ten thousand times more precious than all the riches of the world. It enlightens our darkness, guides us in the way of life, supports us in affliction, and reconciles us to death. Let us bless God for the invaluable labours of John Wickliffe and William Tindale; and for the services of all those venerable and holy men, by whose labours we have been put into the possession of this holy book.

Finally, we should be very careful that we make a right use of what is so estimable. A price is in our hands to get wisdom ; but it will not avail us, unless we have a heart for it. We should read the sacred pages daily, and earnestly pray that the blessing of God may apply their contents to our minds. Those men who have the clearest and best understanding of the Scriptures, are the most happy. To converse with God through the medium of his word, is one of the surest and best means of acquiring divine knowledge. O my soul, be mindful of this, and see that thou art diligent in the perusal of God's most holy word. Let it not be neglected, or superficially attended to by thee ; but mayest thou behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

FINIS.

